

News in Early Modern Europe

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# News in Early Modern Europe

*Currents and Connections*

*Edited by*

Simon F. Davies  
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## Acknowledgements

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# Introduction

*Simon F. Davies and Puck Fletcher*

“For as it was, it was, and no otherwise,” wrote Gilbert Dugdale in a news pamphlet of 1604, reporting a recent murder in Chester. Himself a witness to the events he reported – presumably to the perpetrators’ trial, rather than to the murder itself – Dugdale also found himself “eare-witness” to “divers reports passed vp and downe the streets of Loudon [*sic*],” accounts which mis-reported and “scandalously” exaggerated the true nature of the events. His pamphlet was published, he claimed, to set forth the truth in opposition to such “idle fabling” – to publish what really happened, once and for all.<sup>1</sup>

Dugdale’s intention to set forth in print the plain truth of a recent event embodies a complex problem for those writers and publishers who dealt in news throughout the early modern period: how to fix the shifting nexus of rumour and report surrounding current events into a single, truthful narrative, and how to convince your readers and hearers that you had done so. Dugdale’s blithely optimistic faith in his ability to write the plain truth and to be believed ignores the enormous complexity of the early modern news trade in its constantly developing attempts to report current events, and the persistent doubts held by readers of news about the veracity of what they read. Such optimism was not widely shared.

The business of representing a current event “as it was, and no otherwise” – the business of news – is of vital importance to an understanding of the history of the early modern period. That there was an intense hunger for news right across Europe is undoubtable. The variety of ways in which that hunger was filled – the beginnings, expansions, and developments of the commercial news industry – not only helped shape the ways in which early modern people thought about their world, but, at times, played an active role in shaping that world itself.

This volume represents an interdisciplinary, international contribution to the history of the early modern news trade. News – as both subject matter and means of dissemination – is interpreted broadly and from a wide variety of perspectives. The collection offers a number of case studies of particular moments, places, and forms of news, each of which offers wider insights into the nature and development of the business from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. The true complexity of the early modern news trade is

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1 G. Dugdale, *A True Discourse of the Practises of Elizabeth Caldwell, Ma: Ieffrey Bownd, Isabell Hall widdow, and George Fernely* (London: James Roberts for John Busby, 1604), sig. A3<sup>v</sup>.

increasingly being recognized by historians of the period. It is the hope of the editors that this volume draws out some of the richness of that complexity, both in contributing to our understanding of news in early modern Europe and in suggesting possibilities for future research.

Dugdale's murder pamphlet appeared in print on the cusp of a new era for the European news business. It was one of an enormous number of occasional (i.e. one-off) news pamphlets published across Europe during the early modern period, reporting murders, battles, natural disasters, treasons, robberies, and much more. The second half of the sixteenth century and the early part of the seventeenth was the heyday of the occasional news pamphlet, and it was also around the turn of the century that Europe saw the birth of periodical news, the true original of the modern news business.

There had been a market for news in print since the very beginnings of the print trade. Early publications relating to current events consisted largely of official reports, published to disseminate carefully controlled information about government operations. The business of news took off in a major way in the aftermath of the Reformation, which had created a broad and lucrative market for cheap print. Accordingly, Germany was at the centre of the early news business, where the occasional news pamphlet in quarto was pioneered. Throughout the early modern period, important changes in the course of news publishing often arose as a direct response to large-scale newsworthy events. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, as well as the Reformation, this included the discovery of the New World, the conflict between the Habsburgs and the Valois, and the advance of the Ottoman Empire (the latter still having an impact on news reporting in the seventeenth century, as the chapters by Anna Kalinowska and Virginia Dillon in this volume demonstrate).<sup>2</sup> Later on in the sixteenth century, the French Wars of Religion would also stimulate a demand for news.<sup>3</sup>

Occasional news pamphlets – also known as *Neue Zeitungen*, *occasionnels*, and *relaciones* – remained popular until at least the end of the seventeenth century. They contained everything from the most serious political news (though not usually reporting domestic events) to the most sensational reports

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2 See Andrew Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), for an account and for the context. See also Johannes Weber, "Strassburg, 1605: The Origins of the Newspaper in Europe", *German History*, 24. 3 (2006), pp. 387–412.

3 Lisa Ferraro Parmalee, *Good Newes from Fraunce: French Anti-League propaganda in late Elizabethan England* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1996); Paul J. Voss, *Elizabethan News Pamphlets: Shakespeare, Spenser, Marlowe and the Birth of Journalism* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2001).

of providential, semi-miraculous, supernatural occurrences, and just about everything in between.<sup>4</sup> The chapter by Emma Whipday in this volume looks at examples of relatively serious murder pamphlets, similar to that written by Gilbert Dugdale, while the chapters by Lena Liapi and Andrew Hadfield consider areas of the market – highwaymen and monsters respectively – where truth and fiction could become blurred. Particularly in the early part of the period, such pamphlets were accompanied by varying degrees of moralizing commentary, to which their veracity was secondary. The lesson of current events was foremost; that events were true and could be shown to be such merely provided reinforcement for larger moral truths. It was not until the seventeenth century that accuracy in reporting was commonly seen as valuable for its own sake. Occasional pamphlets were cheap and quick to produce, a good way for printers and publishers to earn easy money alongside the large jobs they produced, although there were also printers and publishers who specialized in news from early on.

Historians tend to agree that the first printed news periodical in Europe was *Mercurius gallobelgicus*, a semi-annual volume, published in Cologne, and later Frankfurt, between 1594 and 1635. *Mercurius gallobelgicus* was a pan-European publication, with both its subject matter and its dissemination spanning several European states, and written in Latin, the language of international communication.<sup>5</sup> Its successors, however, fragmented into the various European vernaculars – although as recent research is revealing in ever more detail, their focus remained international. Periodical news represented a paradigm shift in the business of news: periodicity creates the expectation of more news to come in the future, and it allows for much greater detail as reports are built up slowly and from a variety of perspectives across multiple issues. With issues being numbered, it also encouraged the act of collection, which increases the likelihood of preservation and facilitates our knowledge of the completeness of a surviving run.

4 For some studies of the ‘sensational’ end of this market, see: Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); David Cressy, *Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England: Tales of Discord and Dissension* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Julie Crawford, *Marvelous Protestantism: Monstrous Births in Post-Reformation England* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); Jennifer Spinks, *Monstrous Births and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-century Germany* (London: Chatto & Pickering, 2009).

5 See Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 106, 128–129; id., “International news and the Seventeenth-Century English Newspaper” in Roeland Harms, Joad Raymond, and Jeroen Salman (eds.), *Not Dead Things: The Dissemination of Popular Print in England and Wales, Italy, and the Low Countries, 1500–1820* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), pp. 229, 232.

Germany remained a pioneer, seeing its first weekly newspaper in 1605, the earliest in Europe. A daily newspaper appeared in 1650, and by the end of the century the majority of German cities had their own regular newspaper.<sup>6</sup> The first known Dutch corantos (an early form of periodical news publication) date from 1618.<sup>7</sup> In France a short-lived periodical appeared in 1631, followed in the same year by the *Gazette* of Théophraste Renaudot which, thanks to its official backing, obtained a monopoly, and became the only such publication for some years – a centralization of the business of news quite different from the archipelago of publication found in Germany.<sup>8</sup> The first periodical press in Italy also appeared in the 1630s.<sup>9</sup> Periodical news arrived in Portugal and then Spain in the early 1640s; as elsewhere, inspired by specific military conflicts. The first periodical publication to become fully established in Spain, however, was not until 1661. The *Gaceta Nueva*, as it was called, explicitly acknowledged its debt to the periodical presses of other nations.<sup>10</sup>

The first serial corantos to appear in England were imported from Amsterdam from 1620. After James I banned the import of such publications, home-grown occasional corantos began to be produced. In 1622 publisher Nathaniel Butter gave his weekly corantos a continuous title, *Mercurius Britannicus*, and added continuous dating and issue numbers, although their publication was never entirely regular.<sup>11</sup> As in the sixteenth century,

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- 6 See Thomas Schröder, “The origins of the German press” in Brendan Dooley and Sabrina A. Baron (eds.), *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001); Weber, “Strassburg, 1605”.
  - 7 Folke Dahl, *Dutch Corantos 1618–1650: A Bibliography* (The Hague: Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 1946); Otto Lankhorst, “Newspapers in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century”, and Paul Arblaster, “Policy and publishing in the Habsburg Netherlands, 1585–1690” in Dooley and Baron (eds.), *The Politics of Information*. For a number of case studies relating to news in the Netherlands, see Joop W. Koopmans (ed.), *News and Politics in Early Modern Europe: 1500–1800* (Leuven and Paris: Peeters Publishers, 2005).
  - 8 Jean-Pierre Vittu, “Instruments of political information in France” in Dooley and Baron (eds.), *The Politics of Information*. See also Folke Dahl with Fanny Petibon and Marguerite Boulet, *Les Debuts de la Presse Française: Nouveaux Aperçus* (Göteborg and Paris: Wettergren & Kerber, 1951); Jeffrey K. Sawyer, *Printed Poison: Pamphlet Propaganda, Faction Politics, and the Public Sphere in Early Seventeenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
  - 9 Mario Infelise, “The war, the news and the curious: military gazettes in Italy” in Dooley and Baron (eds.), *The Politics of Information*.
  - 10 Henry Ettinghausen, “Politics and the press in Spain” in Dooley and Baron (eds.), *The Politics of Information*; Javier Díaz Noci, “Dissemination of News in the Spanish Baroque”, *Media History*, 18. 3–4 (2012), pp. 409–421.
  - 11 See Raymond, *Pamphlets*, pp. 128–138; C. John Sommerville, *The News Revolution in England: Cultural Dynamics of Daily Information* (Oxford and New York:



when major world events stimulated a wider market for news in print for the first time, it was the demand for news of the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) in particular that stimulated the development of the periodical press in England (and elsewhere). A recurring concern was for the progress of the Protestant cause on the Continent. Precise periodicity in English news did not arrive until the appearance of the first newsbook in November 1641 (which was quickly followed by competitors).<sup>12</sup> England was unique among European nations in having its printing trade almost entirely situated in one city, and the production of almost all news in London may well have altered the tenor of pieces which covered the provinces, as Andrew Hadfield's chapter in this volume suggests.<sup>13</sup> The fortunes of the periodical press in England continued to fluctuate according to the winds of political change throughout the seventeenth century, only becoming firmly established with the lapse of the Licensing Act in 1695.<sup>14</sup> The first daily newspaper in England appeared in 1702.<sup>15</sup>

Throughout Europe, printed news travelled along paths and networks already established by trade routes, and by postal and carrier services.<sup>16</sup> Trade routes provided both economic justification and practical means – merchants and traders were some of the most important customers of news, given their need for accurate information about distant events, but the shipping routes they established were also the easiest means by which news could travel. The importance of a regular and reliable post has also been recognized as having central importance for the history of news, and the development of news networks went in indivisible tandem with the postal services on which they relied.<sup>17</sup>

Many of the routes which printed news followed had been established by manuscript newsletters, a phenomenon which precedes the invention of print

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- Oxford University Press, 1996); Julia Schleck, "‘Fair and Balanced’ News from the Continent", *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism*, 29. 3 (2007), pp. 323–335; Jayne E.E. Boys, *London's News Press and the Thirty Years War* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011).
- 12 Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks 1641–1649* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005).
  - 13 See Raymond, "International news" in Harms, Raymond and Salman (eds.), *Not Dead Things*, pp. 235–238.
  - 14 Carolyn Nelson and Matthew Secombe, "The creation of the periodical press 1620–1695" in John Barnard and D.F. McKenzie (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain – Volume IV 1557–1695* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
  - 15 Raymond, *Pamphlets*, 159.
  - 16 Harms, Raymond, and Salman (eds.), *Not Dead Things*.
  - 17 See Paul Arblaster, "Posts, Newsletters, Newspapers: England in a European system of communications" in Joad Raymond (ed.), *News Networks in Seventeenth-Century Britain and Europe* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).

but which, as scholars are increasingly exploring, did by no means die out with its advent. Indeed, manuscript newsletters continued in good health until into the eighteenth century. They remained a relatively expensive, elite form of receiving news, but their freedom from the censorship and political control to which print was usually subject allowed for greater freedom in terms of content. They also allowed for a much greater degree of personalization in their content.<sup>18</sup> Manuscript newsletters could even be quicker – indeed, print was the slowest form of news dissemination, usually arriving after oral and manuscript news.<sup>19</sup> While early printed news was heavily influenced by the forms and styles of manuscript news, both would influence and borrow news content from each other throughout the period.

A recurring concern for both writers and readers of news of all kinds, was with issues of truth. For readers, how to know that they could trust what they read to be true? Dugdale's faith in his ability to represent things exactly as they were was not necessarily shared by the purchasers of such material, and news was the subject of attacks on its truthfulness – satirical and worse – throughout the period. However, given the unmistakeable and ever-increasing popularity of news in print, doubts about the veracity of news may have been greater in the minds of those who opposed news full stop, usually for political reasons, than they were in the mind of the general reader. Nevertheless, attempts to convince readers of the truthfulness of accounts were instrumental in shaping the forms news took, the developments of those forms, and the rhetoric its writers adopted, right across the period.<sup>20</sup>

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- 18 Ian Atherton, "The Itch grown a Disease': Manuscript Transmission of News in the Seventeenth Century" in Joad Raymond (ed.), *News, Newspapers, and Society in Early Modern Britain* (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1999); Sabrina A. Baron, "The guises of dissemination in early seventeenth-century England: news in manuscript and print" in Dooley and Baron (eds.), *The Politics of Information*; Filippo de Vivo, "Paolo Sarpi and the Uses of Information in Seventeenth-Century Venice" in Raymond (ed.), *News Networks*; chapters 1–3 in Francisco Bethencourt and Florike Egmond (eds.), *Correspondence and Cultural Exchange in Europe, 1400–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
  - 19 On oral news see: Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Adam Fox and Daniel Woolf (eds.), *The Spoken Word: Oral Culture in Britain, 1500–1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).
  - 20 See David Randall, *Credibility in Elizabethan and Early Stuart Military News* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2008), for some important conclusions in this respect. See also Frances Dolan, *True Relations: Reading, Literature, and Evidence in Seventeenth-Century England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

A persistent enemy of the news trade – not just for its supposed unreliability, though they might use this as a stick to beat it with – were the governments of early modern states. The relationship between news production and government has been an important and fruitful area of research for historians. The precise nature of the relationship differed greatly from state to state and across the period, but can generally be categorized as a gradual loosening of state control over the contents of the news press: early unease and repeated attempts at suppression slowly shifted to attempts to work with, and from within the news press as the period progressed.<sup>21</sup> All attempts to restrict the flow of news were attempts to hold back the tide: over the course of the early modern period news became an inseparable part of European culture.

This account (given here with necessary brevity) is well known, and has recently received much attention from historians. The historiography of news in early modern Europe has in the past decade or so experienced a period of unprecedented interest and growth. The work of Joad Raymond in the late 1990s and early 2000s gave new impetus to the history of news, and ushered in a new wave of scholarship that has vastly expanded and improved our understanding of this history and the processes that lay behind it.<sup>22</sup> The subtitle of this volume – *Currents and Connections* – refers both to the news networks of the period itself and to the latest developments in historiography. New currents of thought and cross-disciplinary connections in the latter are expanding and enhancing our understanding of the forms in which news travelled and the networks along which it did so. In particular, there are four important directions in which the historiography of early modern news is currently moving, all of which are represented in the essays included in this collection: a shift of focus away from the rise of the periodical press; a widening of the definition of news to include other forms; an increasing awareness of language and rhetoric; and a shift away from single-nation studies, thanks to an ever-increasing awareness of the international dimension of early modern news.

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21 See Filippo de Vivo, “Paolo Sarpi and the Uses of Information in Seventeenth-Century Venice” and Jason McElligott, “A Couple of Hundred Squabbling Small Tradesmen? Censorship, the Stationers’ Company, and the state in early modern England” in Raymond (ed.), *News Networks*; Dooley and Baron (eds.), *The Politics of Information*; Koopmans (ed.), *News and Politics*.

22 Raymond (ed.), *Making the News: An Anthology of the Newsbooks of Revolutionary England 1641–1660* (Moreton-in-Marsh: The Windrush Press, 1993); id. (ed.), *News, Newspapers and Society*; id., *Invention*; id., *Pamphlets*; id. (ed.), *News Networks*. For an overview of older scholarship and its accompanying problems, see Raymond’s introductions in *Invention and News, Newspapers and Society*. See the works cited elsewhere in this introduction for Raymond’s important successors.

The development of the periodical press, as outlined above, has been the preoccupation of much of past research into news in early modern Europe. The development of periodicity was of undoubted importance, both in the development of news and in the ways in which it influenced wider cultural developments. However, a particular reason for this focus on periodicity by historians is that it is here that we can trace the origins of the modern newspaper and other modern forms of news dissemination. The emergence of the newspaper, in older historiography, appeared as an inexorable historical development, and even in more recent research, while acknowledging the immediate contexts of periodicity, serial forms are still treated as most important. While the narrative of the development of the periodical press is a sound one, there were many other types of news reporting during the period, and for a long time after the advent of periodical news it was not obvious that it would become the dominant mode of news transmission (as appears with the benefit of historical hindsight). The importance of occasional news reports is reflected in the essays in this volume, the majority of which focus not on periodical productions but on individual pieces relating to specific events, with no expectation of further reports in the same form to come.

Building on this development, current research is also expanding the definition of 'news' itself and moving away from traditional forms of news dissemination. It is not just in those forms that are most similar to modern news forms that we should look for an understanding of how early modern people reported and responded to current events. For example, the significance of literature (traditionally defined) for the dissemination of news is increasingly being recognized. Plays, for instance (as Viviana Comensoli and Lena Steveker's chapters in this volume demonstrate), could both report news and comment on it (and indeed on the processes of its dissemination), as well as potentially becoming news in their own right. In England, as well as inspiring a large expansion in mainstream forms of reportage, the French Wars of Religion also led to the first news plays, with Christopher Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris* (written c. 1590–1593) being one of the earliest examples of a play based on recent current events.<sup>23</sup> Shortly after this, a nexus of domestic tragedies, based with varying degrees of accuracy and contemporaneity on occasional murder pamphlets, appeared around the beginning of the seventeenth century, and plays continued to engage with current events throughout the century.<sup>24</sup>

23 Julia Briggs, "Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris*: A Reconsideration", *The Review of English Studies*, 34. 135 (1983), pp. 237–278; Voss, *Elizabethan News Pamphlets*.

24 Leonore Lieblein, "The Context of Murder in English Domestic Plays, 1590–1610", *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 23. 2 (1983), pp. 181–196; Jerzy Limon,

News was also recycled in ballad form from the earliest days of printed news; indeed ballads are one of the very oldest forms of news in print. As was the case with occasional news pamphlets, news in ballads was often accompanied by a moralistic spin – this approach to news in fact continued longer in ballads than it did in prose pamphlets. The boundary between truth and fiction was blurred, and often news ballads would become popular works for their worth as entertainment alone, being reprinted long after their value as contemporaneous news had been lost.<sup>25</sup> The study of these wider forms reveals that news could be appealing for a variety of reasons, and was connected to a wide range of other discourses.

Other examples could also be given; David Zaret's work on the petition in England during the 1640s has shown how new forms of print opened up new public spaces for competing viewpoints, and facilitated the diversification of opinion.<sup>26</sup> Joop Koopmans has drawn attention to the periodical news digest – monthly, annual, or less frequent summaries of recent history – and to its importance as a vehicle of news dissemination.<sup>27</sup> As a simple scan of the contents will show, 'news' is defined very broadly in this volume. Traditionally studied forms of news are well represented here, but the collection also considers ballads and plays, plague pamphlets, satirical prints, obituary notices, and even rumours.

Given that, as the previous paragraphs might suggest, the history of news writing has also come under the purview of literary historians, it is no surprise that a further development of recent historiography is into study of the

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*Dangerous Matter: English Drama and Politics in 1623/4* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); F.J. Levy, "Staging the News" in Michael D. Bristol and Arthur F. Marotti (eds), *Print, Manuscript, & Performance: The Changing Relations of the Media in Early Modern England* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2000); Henk Gras, "The Elizabethan Theatre as Early Modern Television" in Koopmans (ed.), *News and Politics*; Marcus Nevitt, "Ben Jonson and the Serial Publication of News" in Raymond (ed.), *News Networks*; Marissa Greenberg, "Signs of the Crimes: Topography, Murder, and Early Modern Domestic Tragedy", *Genre*, 40. 1 (2007), pp. 1–29.

- 25 Angela McShane Jones, "The Gazet in Metre; or the Rhiming Newsmonger. The English Broadside Ballad as Intelligencer. A New Narrative" in Koopmans (ed.), *News and Politics*; Sandra Clark, *Women and Crime in the Street Literature of Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), chapter 3; Natascha Würzbach, *The Rise of the English Street Ballad, 1550–1650*, trans. G. Walls (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), chapter 4.2.3.
- 26 David Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture: Printing, Petitions, and the Public Sphere in Early-Modern England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).
- 27 Joop W. Koopmans, "Storehouses of News: The Meaning of Early Modern News Periodicals in Western Europe" in Harms, Raymond, and Salman (eds.), *Not Dead Things*.

language and rhetoric of news publications. The study of developments in the ways in which accounts were constructed offers illuminating insights into both the history of news in its own right and, more widely, into early modern perceptions of the events being reported in news publications. The work of Nicholas Brownlees in particular has pioneered study in this area; a number of the chapters in this volume follow in his footsteps.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, current research is also replacing the nation-based approaches of older historiography. This is occurring not just in terms of an ever-increasing recognition of the wide variety and complexity that existed *within* individual nations, but also in terms of greater research into the international connectedness of news production, dissemination, and reception. It was not just as a result of prohibitions (whether real or imagined) on the reporting of domestic news that led so many news publications to focus on foreign news; their readership had a genuine and extensive interest in international events. Scholars are increasingly gaining a much clearer sense of a Europe-wide network of communication (albeit a flexible and constantly shifting one) through which, and because of which, the business of news flourished.<sup>29</sup> The chapters in the first section of this volume explore news as it travelled across international boundaries, a wider view essential to a full understanding of the business of news in early modern Europe.

*News in Early Modern Europe: Currents and Connections* is divided into four sections, each including studies which consider a central issue in early modern

28 Nicholas Brownlees, *Corantos and Newsbooks: Language and Discourse in the first English Newspapers (1620–1641)* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 1999); id. (ed.), *News Discourse in Early Modern Britain. Selected Papers of CHINED 2004* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006); id., *The Language of Periodical News in Seventeenth-Century England* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011). See also: Caren auf dem Keller, *Textual Structures in Eighteenth-century Newspaper Advertising. A Corpus-based Study of Medical Advertisements and Book Advertisements* (Aachen: Shaker, 2004); Andreas H. Jucker (ed.), *Early Modern English News Discourse: Newspapers, pamphlets and scientific news discourse* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2007).

29 Arblaster, "Posts, Newsletters, Newspapers" in Raymond (ed.), *News Networks*; Francesca Trivellato, "Merchants' letters across geographical and social boundaries" in Bethencourt and Egmond (eds.), *Correspondence and Cultural Exchange*; Brendan Dooley (ed.), *The Dissemination of News and the Emergence of Contemporaneity in Early Modern Europe* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2010); Schleck, "News from the Continent"; Carmen Espejo, "European Communication Networks in the Early Modern Age", *Media History*, 17. 2 (2011), pp. 189–202; Raymond, "International news" in Harms, Raymond, and Salman (eds.), *Not Dead Things*. The News Networks research group at Queen Mary, University of London, has produced useful work in this respect; two volumes of essays are forthcoming.

news from a variety of perspectives. The first section, “International News Networks,” presents three case studies, each highlighting the functioning of a particular news network in early modern Europe. Each chapter demonstrates how the nature of these networks fundamentally influenced the type and tenor of news that was reported. The material processes of dissemination had a very real effect on the information that the early modern reader received.

Joop Koopmans's chapter highlights the importance of the delay between the event and the news report of it – and of what happened in the meantime. Koopmans builds on the research in Brendan Dooley's collection *The Dissemination of News and the Emergence of Contemporaneity in Early Modern Europe* (2010), offering further evidence for how the concept of contemporaneity developed during the period, as well as extending the arguments of that collection into the eighteenth century and into the Dutch Republic. Koopmans takes a single, momentous event in Portugal (the Lisbon earthquake of 1755) and analyses how news of that event spread through Dutch newspapers. The study provides a fascinating example of how international news networks can be traced by historians, the ways in which the functioning of those networks had an impact on what was read, and the ways in which people interpreted events when they were ignorant of their cause (in this case the rise of water levels caused by the distant earthquake).

Anna Kalinowska's study of how news reports from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth appeared in English news media in the first half of the seventeenth century also shows how the functioning of dissemination networks affected the nature of the news that was reported elsewhere. The chapter offers a rich picture of the extent of the networks that lay behind English corantos, and of the general success of the English news gathering business. Coverage turns out to be surprisingly comprehensive and increasingly complex, its publishers demonstrating an ever-increasing sense of the international connectivity of current events.

Virginia Dillon's chapter offers another case study illustrating the ways in which news travelled along networks throughout Europe, assessing the ways in which different aspects of a particular news event – the fluctuating political and military fortunes of the mid-seventeenth century Transylvanian prince György II Rákóczi – were given differing prominence in different regions, according to the relationship between the events and the reporting publication's locale. Once again it is found that the functioning of the news networks themselves affected the nature of the news reports. Dillon also presents the results of her analysis of the language of the news reports in question – another factor affected by the origin of the reports, and by the political and ideological relationship between source and destination.

Section two, “Exploring the Boundaries: News as Entertainment, Propaganda, Satire,” focuses on a variety of occasional news publications. The three studies in this section consider how news reporting could arise for intentions other than simple reportage, and how news publications engaged with wider issues. As these chapters demonstrate, there are important reasons for including such material in discussions of news discourse, while at the same time they remind us of the importance of retaining a sense of the differences between types of discourse, and the disparate functions of different forms. In addition, these chapters show us that much of what we now term ‘news’ in fact relied either on prior knowledge or a given ideological position in order for it to be understood and to achieve its intended effects.

Andrew Hadfield’s chapter offers a close analysis of an intriguing occasional ‘news’ pamphlet, London publisher John Trundle’s *True and Wonderful: A Discourse relating a strange and monstrous serpent (or dragon) lately discovered* (1614). Hadfield explores various ways of reading the pamphlet, both as a piece of news and as a piece of popular publishing. The pamphlet presents what is among the most striking English examples of a publication in which the boundary between news and fiction is irretrievably blurred – at least in the sense of the intentions of the publisher (there is little doubt that the report’s origin is purely fictional). The study raises important wider questions about the meaning of occasional pamphlets such as this one, and has important implications for the consideration of the ways in which news from the provinces was read in the capital.

A similar blurring of boundaries, this time between news and propaganda, is witnessed in the subject of Lena Liapi’s chapter. Liapi offers a fascinating study of the potential for propaganda in the news reports of the notorious highwayman James Hind in the mid-seventeenth century, reports which straddled the boundaries between truthful reportage, Royalist propaganda, and literary myth-making. Both news stories and news forms could be appropriated for use in larger political battlegrounds.

Andrew Morton’s chapter looks at a relatively neglected area of news discourse – visual culture – via a detailed close study of a satirical print relating to the Popish Plot, *The Catholick Gamesters* (1680). Morton reminds us that although there are benefits to integrating a variety of different forms within the umbrella of news discourse, doing so should not be at the expense of retaining a sense of the specific intent and reception of different forms of publication. Prints, and satirical prints in particular, achieved their full impact in highly specific circumstances that need to be understood to fully appreciate their meaning – a meaning of which their very ephemerality was an intrinsic part. It is a conclusion that surely has implications for news publications more



widely. Morton's chapter also emphasizes the capacity of satire to inspire action, rather than simply to comment on or report events, and is a strong reminder that news discourse itself could play a very real, active part in the political sphere.

The third section, "News and Social History," considers ways in which news reporting influenced and was influenced by a variety of social issues. The chapters in this section cover the gamut of different forms of news – rumour and manuscript news, occasional pamphlets, newspapers – and the length of the period, but they are united by their demonstration of the potential that news has as a means of obtaining understanding of much broader historical issues.

John Hunt's chapter discusses a form of news which played a vitally important role in the dissemination of information about current events in early modern Europe, and yet one which is rarely studied, no doubt as a result of the difficulties of obtaining evidence about it: rumour. Oral dissemination of news was important not just as a form of news dissemination in its own right – the fastest, simplest, and most widespread form – but also in its influence on the ways in which printed and other more concrete forms of news were formed. Witness, for example, the constant prefacing of printed news reports – such as Dugdale's – with attacks on unverified rumour, as opposed to the supposed fixity of their own reportage. Hunt assesses the effect that rumours and manuscript newsletter reports of the Pope's death had on social life in early modern Rome. Given the importance of the event, even the most vague scraps of information could have vital significance, and thus major consequences for Roman society. Hunt's chapter also provides examples of failures of early modern news dissemination, and the trouble that could arise when it went wrong.

Emma Whipday's chapter focuses on English occasional news pamphlets reporting marital murders in the early seventeenth century. Whipday explores the ways in which concepts of neighbourhood and neighbourliness in English communities are both revealed to historians and constructed for contemporaries within these works. The pamphlets' scrutiny of ideals of neighbourhood, and their fashioning of imaginative ideal communities, helped to contain the potential for social disruption that reports of domestic violence possessed. Whipday's research offers another example of how news could have a social function in its own right, reinforcing ideas of neighbourhood and community.

In a similar manner, Catherine Tremain's chapter analyses how concepts of gender appear in obituary notices in eighteenth-century provincial newspapers. These short printed notices of death offer a rich source of study for the

virtues and character traits prized by the 'middling sort' in the period. As Tremain demonstrates, the ideal virtues displayed in obituaries not only offer a reflection of shifting gender relations, but may have themselves contributed to said shifts. Tremain's analysis is an excellent example of how wider social issues can be explored via a study of news.

Finally, the fourth section of this volume, "News in Literary Forms," considers yet further variety in the form of news – specifically, the interactions between writing on current events and more traditionally literary forms of writing. As discussed above, literary forms are increasingly being recognized as having particular importance as forms of news dissemination in their own right, as well as having a wider impact on the ways in which news was reported in other forms of writing.

Viviana Comensoli's chapter discusses the interactions between writing the news, writing about the plague, and writing about print culture itself in the work of Thomas Dekker in early seventeenth-century London. The plague was a driving force behind news reporting throughout the early modern period. Dekker's pamphlets on the subject, particularly *The Wonderful yeare* (1603), offer meditations both on the plague and on the business of writing news. As with the chapters in section two of this volume, we are once again confronted with the slippery boundary between truth and fiction, between reporting and storytelling.

Lena Steveker's chapter looks at how news was translated onto the English stage during the first half of the seventeenth century, via a close study of two 'news plays', Thomas Middleton's *A Game at Chess* (1624) and Ben Jonson's *The Staple of News* (1626). Rather than translating (or merely translating) current events onto the stage in the way that drama at the beginning of the century had done, these plays both, in different ways, comment on the culture of news itself. Steveker demonstrates that both plays form a part of the theatre's ambiguous counter attack on a news industry expanding as never before in England at this time. The theatre and the news press existed in a shifting relationship of mutual influence on the one hand, and commercial and cultural competition on the other.

Nicolas Moon's essay analyses the appearance of news in broadside ballads in early modern England. Moon pays particular attention to the language of truthfulness and the ways in which this was presented in ballads and their paratexts; an issue which, as we have seen, ran at the heart of much news publications throughout the period. Ballads had a particularly poor reputation for veracity but, as Moon shows, they could be highly creative in their attempts to overcome this. In doing so they engaged with much wider issues concerning credit in print culture and the importance of the forms in which early modern writers represented contemporary events.

Together the essays in this volume show the variety and richness of the business of news in early modern Europe; the difficulties raised along the path of development of a range of news forms; and the importance which news reporting has both for a historical understanding of early modern culture, and for its contemporary impact on that culture.



**PART 1**

***International News Networks***





# The 1755 Lisbon Earthquake and Tsunami in Dutch News Sources

## *The Functioning of Early Modern News Dissemination*

*Joop W. Koopmans*

On Saturday 1 November 1755 the weather was tranquil in the Dutch city of Groningen.<sup>1</sup> Despite the calmness, around 11 AM the water suddenly rose in the Groningen canals for a short time. Ships smashed against the quays, their lines snapped, and their masts hit each other. A leeboard of one of the ships was completely shattered. At the time, Groningen – one of the few important towns in the northeastern part of the Dutch Republic – still had an open connection with the North Sea, and so the Groningen population was used to different water levels in their canals, corresponding to the tides. This sudden rise of the water level, however, was very strange and could not be explained by the normal tides. The strange phenomenon must have been the talk of the town, the news of the day throughout the city. All eyewitnesses would have told it to their family members, to neighbours, and to other people who had not witnessed the event. During the following weeks, the Groningen population could see from the Dutch newspapers that their town was not unique in this respect. In many European cities the water had surged unexpectedly. But it was only near the end of the month that the Groningen inhabitants were informed as to why the water had suddenly risen. It was the result of a tsunami caused by the severe earthquake that had devastated Portugal's capital of Lisbon and its surroundings, a disaster that produced thousands of victims and incredible misery.<sup>2</sup>

In this chapter I will use the 1755 Lisbon earthquake and tsunami as a means to explore the dissemination of international news to the Dutch Republic in the mid-eighteenth century, addressing the following questions: what kind of

- 1 This chapter is an extension of part of my Dutch article "Groningen en het tempo van internationaal nieuws: Een vergelijking van kranten uit de 18e eeuw, toegespitst op berichten over de aardbeving en tsunami van Lissabon (1755)" in Maarten Duijvendak et al. (eds.), *Historisch jaarboek Groningen* (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2011), pp. 36–51. For comments and suggestions I am grateful to Raingard Esser, Will Slauter, and Megan Williams.
- 2 Recent studies about the Lisbon earthquake include Nicholas Shrady, *The Last Day: Wrath, Ruin, and Reason in the Great Lisbon Earthquake of 1755* (New York [etc.]: Viking, 2008); Edward Paice, *Wrath of God: The Great Lisbon Earthquake of 1755* (London: Quercus, 2008).

news about the earthquake reached the Netherlands, and from or via which places? How did Dutch editors process the events in their news media, and which sources did they use? How did people react to news items, such as the Lisbon earthquake, that had happened far away and weeks or months before they could read about them? What did ‘topicality’ mean for these readers? In short, this chapter elaborates for eighteenth-century news media the idea of contemporaneity, a concept defined by Brendan Dooley as “the perception, shared by a number of human beings, of experiencing a particular event at more or less the same time.”<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the Lisbon case offers insight into the working of European news networks, in this case stretching from the southwestern part of Europe to the Dutch Republic.

My chapter is mainly based on eighteenth-century Dutch news media, in particular newspapers in Dutch, printed in November and December 1755. First, I will analyse how those news channels reported the catastrophic news to find out what people had known or guessed about the tsunami and earthquake, and when they received information with corresponding explanations. The subsequent section deals with aspects of early modern news dissemination in Europe, and discusses what sources Dutch newspaper editors may have used, and by which routes they received their information about the tidal waves and earthquake. The last section will consider a few consequences related to the speed of early modern news dissemination, such as speculation about the causes and effects of the sudden tidal surges at a time when news media could only guess about the reasons, people’s reflection on the events and channels for this reflection, and their awareness of contemporaneity. This chapter adds a Dutch dimension to the 2005 volume of Theodore Braun and John Radner about the Lisbon earthquake.<sup>4</sup>

### Dutch News Media about the Tsunami and Earthquake

Groningen newspaper readers could read a short account about the 1 November tidal surge in their city in the Tuesday 4 November edition of their biweekly

3 Brendan Dooley (ed.), *The Dissemination of News and the Emergence of Contemporaneity in Early Modern Europe* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), p. xiii.

4 Theodore E.D. Braun and John B. Radner (eds.), *The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755: Representations and reactions: SVEC 2005:02* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2005). The chapter in Braun and Radner by Anne Saada and Jean Sgard (“Tremblement dans la presse,” pp. 208–234), which was on Dutch responses, only studied several French gazettes that were printed in the Netherlands.



*Opregte Groninger Courant* [Sincere Groningen Newspaper].<sup>5</sup> The newspaper stated, “something happened last Saturday, of which there has been no example in this country for many centuries.”<sup>6</sup> The report was combined with similar messages from villages near Groningen where similar surges had also occurred. Letters from Zwolle, a town located approximately a hundred kilometres southwest of Groningen, also mentioned ship damage in the city waters. Such news items could also be found in subsequent editions of the Groningen newspaper. The Friday 7 November edition, for example, reported the inexplicable water movements in many other parts of the Dutch Republic; chandeliers in churches had swayed spontaneously and church visitors – it was All Saints’ Day for Roman Catholics – had been frightened. The Groningen editor ended with the remark that many people thought these occurrences had been caused by a light earthquake, too weak to shake the ground in a way perceptible to human beings.<sup>7</sup> This was implicitly corrected in a later edition, which reported that in the Zeeland capital of Middelburg, carpenters, while repairing the Abbey Tower, had become scared when the tower had started to shake unexpectedly. In the afternoon they had resumed their renovation activities with fear.<sup>8</sup>

Two weeks after the 1 November event the Groningen newspaper published the first messages from abroad, describing what had happened in the German North Sea harbour of Glückstadt (near Hamburg) and, more extensively, the Baltic Sea harbour of Travemünde (near Lübeck). In Travemünde a few men had thought for a while that the movement of the water had been caused by a big fish.<sup>9</sup> The 18 November Groningen edition – almost three weeks after the event had taken place – also included news about the rise of the water in the English harbour of Portsmouth, where HMS Gosport was under repair and had been shaken tremendously in her dock. After having read such news items, the Groningen newspaper readers could combine these reports with their own experiences. In the meantime there was the possibility for them to read

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5 Newspaper editions are only mentioned in footnotes when they or the dates of the discussed news items do not appear in the main text.

6 Quote in Dutch: “Van hier valt te melden dat voorleeden Zaturdag yets gebeurd is waar van hier te Lande geen Voorbeeld in veele Eeuwen geweest is[.]”

7 See also the *Opregte Groninger Courant* (OGC), 11 November 1755 (<http://kranten.delpher.nl>). The OGC had started in 1743, with permission of the city government, as was necessary for all Dutch newspapers, and was also published on Fridays. Copius Hoitsema, *De drukkersgeslachten Sipkes-Hoitsema en de Groninger Courant* (Groningen: Verenigde Drukkerijen Hoitsema, 1953), pp. 80–84; Bart Tammeling, *De krant bekeken: De geschiedenis van de dagbladen in Groningen en Drenthe* (Groningen: Nieuwsblad van het Noorden, 1988), pp. 20–22.

8 OGC, 18 November 1755.

9 OGC, 14 November 1755.

comparable news reports in other Dutch newspapers that were sold in Groningen or were brought to the city by visitors.

Since 1752, the Groningen newspaper's nearest 'competitor' was the *Leeuwarder Courant*, published in Friesland's capital of Leeuwarden.<sup>10</sup> At the time the Frisian newspaper appeared once a week, on Saturday, and so the first report by this newspaper about the waves was published in the 8 November edition.<sup>11</sup> Like the Groningen newspaper, the *Leeuwarder Courant* started with information about the rise of the water nearby, in Leeuwarden and a few other Frisian towns, such as Franeker, where a horse had stampeded fearfully after confrontation with the rising water. One long sentence summarized messages from cities and villages all over the province of Holland where the water had risen:

In Amsterdam, Leiden, Delft, Haarlem, Rotterdam, Woubrugge, Boskoop, and several other places, people have noticed a motion in the water at the same time, and it is said that the chandeliers in several Amsterdam churches moved.<sup>12</sup>

This sentence taught the Frisian readers that the Holland population had experienced the same phenomenon as they had. The news about Travemünde was published in the subsequent edition of Saturday 15 November, thus almost simultaneously with the Groningen newspaper, which included the German news in the Friday edition of 14 November. On Saturday 22 November the Leeuwarden newspaper reported on Portsmouth and – without mentioning their names – “a few other English harbours.” These messages had been picked up in Amsterdam almost a week before, on 14 November, according to the report's date. Below this piece of news, Frisian readers could also note that French Bordeaux had been hit by a brief earthquake on 1 November.

In 1755 most Dutch newspapers were printed in the densely populated province of Holland: in Amsterdam, Haarlem, Leiden, The Hague, Delft, and Rotterdam. The city of Utrecht also had its own newspaper. Most of these

10 Marcel Broersma, *Beschaafde vooruitgang: De wereld van de Leeuwarder Courant 1752–2002* (Leeuwarden: Friese Pers Boekerij, 2002); id., “Constructing Public Opinion: Dutch Newspapers on the Eve of a Revolution (1780–1795)” in Joop W. Koopmans (ed.), *News and Politics in Early Modern Europe (1500–1800)* (Leuven, Paris, and Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2005), pp. 219–235.

11 See <http://www.archiefleeuwardercourant.nl>. The *Leeuwarder Courant* (LC) still exists.

12 Quote in Dutch: “Te Amsterdam, Leiden, Delft, Haarlem, Rotterdam, Woubrugge, Boskoop, en op andere Plaatzen meer, heeft men op die zelfde tyd zulk een ontroeringe in het Water bespeurd, en zo men wil, zouden te Amsterdam in verscheiden Kerken de Kroonen aan het bewegen geweest zyn.” LC, 8 November 1755.

cities' newspapers, such as the *Amsterdamse Courant*, included information about the shaking of the water in their own towns and several places in other parts of Western Europe.<sup>13</sup> A few of them reported the event only briefly. The 's *Gravenhaegse* [The Hague] *Courant* of Monday 3 November, for example, published a sober message of five lines about the trembling of the earth in The Hague, and four lines concerning Amsterdam. The newspaper mentioned The Hague, with 2 November in the dateline:

Yesterday morning people felt a small trembling of the earth, which was mostly noticed in the canals, where a few vessels' ropes became untied, but causing no further damage.<sup>14</sup>

Subsequent editions, however, remained silent about similar events in other Dutch and foreign regions. Even more surprisingly, the *Utrechtse Courant* did not publish a single word about the rise of water in its own city and province.<sup>15</sup> On Friday 7 November, which was rather late, the Utrecht newspaper included a message about what had happened in Rotterdam – slightly different from the more extensive account in the *Rotterdamse Courant* of Tuesday 4 November. Furthermore, only Glückstadt was mentioned in the 12 November edition and Bordeaux in the 21 November edition of the Utrecht newspaper, so altogether only a small selection of news concerning the topic appeared in this coranto.<sup>16</sup>

In contrast to the newspapers of Utrecht and The Hague, the Rotterdam newspaper included the news about the trembling war ship in the Portsmouth

13 See e.g. *Amsterdamse Courant* (AC; used copy Amsterdam City Archives), *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* (OHC; used copy: Museum Enschedé in Haarlem), and *Hollandsche Historische Courant* (HHC; published in Delft – used copy Royal Library The Hague; thanks to Fernando Martinez Luna for his assistance), 4 November 1755. These three newspapers had editions on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday.

14 Quote in Dutch: "Gisteren morgen heeft men hier een kleynen schudding van een Aerdbeeving gevoeld, welkers beweeging het meest in de Gragten is geweest, zynde 'er eenige Vaertuygen van hunne Touwen afgeraekt, dog verders geen schade veroorzaakt." Used copy: The Hague Municipal Archives. The 's *Gravenhaegse Courant* (sGrC) had editions on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

15 Used copy: The Utrecht Archives. The *Utrechtse Courant* (UC) was published on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Other newspapers show that the water had also risen in the province and city of Utrecht. See e.g. OHC and HHC, 6 November 1755; *Leydse Courant* (LeyC), 7 November 1755; OGC, 11 November 1755. The *Gazette d'Utrecht* of 4 November 1755 mentioned a trembling of the earth in The Hague. Saada and Sgard, "Tremblements," p. 210.

16 The Amsterdam newspaper mentioned Lübeck in the 11 November edition, and Bordeaux in the 22nd, just as the Haarlem and Delft (HHC) newspapers did. The Delft newspaper mentioned Glückstadt in the 13 November edition.

docks in its edition of Thursday 13 November.<sup>17</sup> As Rotterdam was a harbour city near the sea, it does not seem very peculiar that the Rotterdam newspaper paid more attention to the event than the newspapers of Utrecht and The Hague. Furthermore, it is logical that the Rotterdam newspaper published the English news earlier than other Dutch newspapers; most news accounts from England intended for the Dutch Republic left Harwich with the packet boat and entered the country at Hellevoetsluis near Rotterdam. From there they were disseminated to the rest of the Netherlands.<sup>18</sup> Astonishingly, however, the *Leydse* [Leiden] *Courant* and the *Hollandsche Historische Courant*, which was published in Delft, published more news about the rising water in several Dutch cities and villages than the Rotterdam and also the Amsterdam newspaper did.<sup>19</sup> Leiden and Delft were – like Utrecht and The Hague – not harbour cities. The Leiden and Delft editors, however, must have considered the topic an interesting one for their reading public, which they knew was found far outside their own cities.

Not before the end of the month did the Dutch newspapers present the real explanation for the sudden rise of the water in the Netherlands, preceded in most of the papers by very similar reports – same content and same structure – about an earthquake in Madrid.<sup>20</sup> Subsequently, between 26 and 29 November, editions of all Dutch newspapers informed their readers about the earthquake that had forcefully struck the Portuguese capital of Lisbon and its surroundings on 1 November.<sup>21</sup> As is known today, it was an earthquake with an estimated strength of almost 9 in magnitude on the Richter scale, comparable

17 Used copy: Rotterdam City Archives. The *Rotterdamse Courant* (RoC) was published on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday.

18 Jacob. C. Overvoorde, *Geschiedenis van het postwezen in Nederland vóór 1795, met de voornaamste verbindingen met het buitenland* (Leiden: A. W. Sijthoff, 1902), pp. 277–281. See also e.g. sGrC, 19 and 22 December 1755, in which letters that “have been seen in Rotterdam” are quoted.

19 *LeyC*, 3 and 7 November 1755 (<http://www.archiefleiden.nl <kranten>>). This newspaper had editions on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; *HHC*, 4, 6, 8, and 13 November 1755. There were reports about Portsmouth in *LeyC* on 12 and in *HHC* on 13 November 1755.

20 sGrC and *UC*, 24 November 1755; *OHC*, *HHC*, and *RoC*, 25 November; *LC*, 29 November. These reports vary between 72 and 95 words, and are similar to the report that was published in *La Gazette de Cologne*, quoted in Saada and Sgard, “Tremblements,” pp. 210–211. See Appendix. A message in *AC*, 25 November, with dateline “Paris, 17 November,” contains the news that there had been an earthquake across Spain and Italy on the same day that the movement of the water had happened in England, Bordeaux, Northern Germany, and almost all cities in the province of Holland. Also reported in *OGC*, 28 November 1755.

21 sGrC, 26 November 1755; *AC*, *OHC*, *HHC*, and *RoC*, 27 November; *LeyC* and *OGC*, 28 November; *LC*, 29 November.

with the Fukushima earthquake in Japan in March 2011. A terrifying tidal wave had accompanied the earthquake, and fires had destroyed most of the remaining parts of the city. The timespan of almost one month that it took this news from Portugal to reach the Dutch Republic, corresponds with average figures for the publication of Portuguese news in Dutch newspapers during the eighteenth century (Fig. 1.1).<sup>22</sup>

As soon as the news about Lisbon reached the Dutch newspapers' printing presses, people were eager to read about the disaster, which was a rare and unusual topic for them. The chronicler Jan de Boer recorded that the 26 November edition of *'s Gravenhaegse Courant*, the first Dutch newspaper with the Lisbon news, immediately sold out. Curiosity was coupled with dismay and concern. When the merchants present at the Amsterdam stock exchange heard the tragic news, they were shocked and worried about the



FIGURE 1.1 Part of the front page of the Amsterdam newspaper of Thursday 27 November 1755, in which the first news about the Lisbon earthquake is published. Copy in Stadsarchief Amsterdam (Amsterdam City Archives), photograph by Joop Koopmans.

22 Joop W. Koopmans, "Supply and Speed of News to the Netherlands during the Eighteenth Century: a Comparison of Newspapers in Haarlem and Groningen" in *News and Politics*, pp. 185–201 (particularly Table 3).

fate of their fellow merchants and their merchandise in the Portuguese capital.<sup>23</sup>

The Portuguese disaster must have taken the news editors by surprise. The Haarlem newspaper, for example, published the terrible news after an item on market reports that simply ended with: “no exchange rate from Lisbon.” The readers had to conclude for themselves why Lisbon did not have an exchange rate listed, which they understood, of course, after having read the earthquake news.<sup>24</sup> During the next weeks, many news accounts followed about the huge devastation, the thousands of victims, the aftershocks, Portuguese attempts to control the disaster, and the aid from other countries, in particular Spain and Great Britain. With regard to the victims, many different figures were mentioned because nobody had any idea about how many people had died or survived.<sup>25</sup>

Within the Portuguese stream of news items, the Delft and Groningen newspaper editors appeared to be the only two who made an explicit connection between the Lisbon calamity and the sudden tidal surges nearby that had happened four weeks before. In its 2 December issue the Groningen newspaper quoted:

In the meantime people may conclude from all these heartbreaking and tragic messages that the rise of the water, which people here and from all over the Netherlands have noticed on the first of this month, was a general phenomenon[.]<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore the editor concluded that God had spared the Netherlands.

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- 23 Jan Willem Buisman, “Het bevend Nederland: De Republiek en de aardbeving van Lissabon 1755–1756,” *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, 92 (1979), pp. 20–42, at 26–27. See also Saada and Sgard, “Tremblements,” p. 221; Jeroen Blaak, “Informatie in een ander tijdperk: Nieuws in het dagboek van Jan de Boer (1747–1758),” *Mededelingen van de Stichting Jacob Campo Weyerman*, 25 (2002), pp. 57–69, at 64–66.
  - 24 In his subsequent edition of 29 November, the Haarlem editor mentioned again “no exchange rate from Lisbon,” however this time with the addition that the news corresponded with letters of 28 October that had been sent before the earthquake.
  - 25 E.g. *AC* and *RoC*, 27 November 1755; *LeyC*, 28 November 1755; *UC*, 10 December 1755; *AC*, 13 December 1755; *HHC*, 20 December 1755.
  - 26 *HHC*, 29 November 1755. The Dutch (longer quote) in *OGC*, almost the same as in *HHC*: “Ondertusschen kan men uyt alle deeze hertgrievende en naare berigten, besluyten, dat de Waterschuddingen die men den eersten passato hier en byna door geheel Nederland gevoeld heeft, algemeen geweest zy[n], en dat de Nederlanden door Gods Goedertierenheyd slegts een flauw gevoel en dreuning ondervonden hebben van de allerysselykste Aardbeeying, waardoor Lissabon is vernield geworden, en die zig langs de geheele Kust van Portugal en Spanjen tot aan Gibraltar heeft doen gevoelen.”

The Amsterdam newspaper published an extra, one-page issue on Saturday 6 December, a so-called *Na-courant* [after newspaper], including an extensive account about the disaster that had been received and most likely dispersed in Paris. The Groningen newspaper published the same text in an extra edition on Monday 8 November.<sup>27</sup> There are only slight spelling differences between the two issues, which suggests either that both editors used the same translation, or that the Groningen editor copied the Amsterdam issue very early, as it took about a day to bring the report from Amsterdam to Groningen. Such extra editions were rather unusual and emphasized the great news value of the earthquake and its consequences. Apart from commercial reasons and the wish to deliver news as fast as possible, it has to be understood, of course, that an extra edition must have been a practical solution, at least for the Groningen publisher. Most early modern printing houses were limited in capacity and in the case of newspapers, did not have much scope beyond what was needed to realize the regular editions, and so the publisher or printer could only use his printing press for extra editions on days when it was already available (Fig. 1.2).

The Dutch obviously worried about the fate of compatriots who were in or nearby Lisbon at the time of the disaster. This is reflected in their newspapers, of which several published lists of ships and persons who had survived the disaster. As early as 29 November, the Haarlem newspaper, for instance, mentioned that the Dutch consul Jan Gildemeester and a few Dutch merchants were safe.<sup>28</sup> The same news item ended, however, with the remark that nothing was known about the situation of the other Dutch envoy in Lisbon, Jean François Bosc de la Calmette. After ten days the newspaper confirmed, twice, that he was still alive. This was based on messages in private letters received from England and a letter from the diplomat himself.<sup>29</sup> In the meantime the Leiden newspaper had published the rumour that Bosc de la Calmette had not survived the disaster.<sup>30</sup> A similar tension was created, particularly for relatives and friends, by the Haarlem editor publishing a list of Dutch ships in

27 *De Voorlooper van de* [The Forerunner of the] *Groninger Dingsdaagsche* [Tuesday] *Courant*. These extra issues open with: "Paris, the first of December. Just now an extraordinary courier from Lisbon has brought the following truthful story about the miseries, which happened on the first of last month as a result of the terrible earthquake[.]" (In Dutch: "Parys, den eersten December. So even ontfangt men met een buitengewoon courier van Lissabon het volgende naauwkeurig verhaal der onheylen die den eersten der voorleeden Maand aldaar door de bewuste vreeslyke Aardbeeying zyn voorgevallen[.]").

28 Also *LeyC*, 1 December 1755.

29 *oHC*, 9 December 1755; also *sGrC* and *LeyC*, 8 December 1755.

30 *LeyC*, 3 December 1755. On both diplomats' visit to the Portuguese king, see *LeyC*, 22 December 1755.

# De Voorlooper van de Groninger Dingsdaagsche Courant, Maandag den 8 December. 1755.

## FRANKRYK.

**P**ARYS den eersten December. So even ontfangt men met een buitengewoon courier van Lissabon het volgende nauwkeurig verhaal oer onheylen die den eersten der voorleeden Maand aldaar door de bewijde vreeslyke Aardbeving zijn voorgevallen luydende aldus:

Op Allerheiligen dag des morgens ten 9 uren gevoelden men door geheel Portugal en voornamelyk in de Hoofd Stad Lissabon zulk een vreeslyke Aardbeving als ooit in eenig Weereldgedeelte geweest is: deezze Stad die de Rykthe van geheel Europa was; de Diamanten aan alle de andere Natien fourneerde, en alwaar byna niet anders dan Goud in zwang gong, is tegenwoordig niet dan een stapel van Kalk en Steenbrokken, waar onder meer dan Honderd Duysend Menschen Leevendig zijn Begraaven geworden; gelukkig zijn de Inwoonders dewelke in dit vreeslyk toeval uytlandig geweest zijn! Zy hebben ten minsten het Leeven behouden, 't welk zy mooglyk veel liever verloorren zouden willen hebben, dewyl zy zig nu van Bloedverwanten en Vrienden beroofd zien. De Aardbeving volgde kort op een orkaan die een verschrikkelyk Zee Water veroorzaakte: de Rivier de Taag Zwol daar door op een vreeslyke wyze en terzelve tyd hoorde men de Huysdeuren van alle kanten openbarsten, en de Muuren en Zolderingen insinken; kortom het schiet als of de Jongste dag was gekomen, en dat den eenen steen niet op den andere zoude blyven. De Menschen die nog ter ruste lagen, wierden wel haast opgewekt door 't geweldigh schudden hunner Huizen, en het geratel van 't insinken der Wooningen van hunne Nabuuren, en waren nergens anders op bedagt dan zig met de vlugt te salveeren, dog de meeste daar van, zijn elendig onder hun eyge dak vermoord; en de geeste die zig in die hooge nood uyt hunne Huizen op Straat konden begeeven, liepen met alhun magt buyten de Stad. Nimmer kan men een denkbeeld maaken van de droefheid en schrik door dit droefvich schouwspel veroorzaakt, en waar van het verhaal alleen van schrik doet Zidderen: Mannen en Vrouwen van allerlei conditie liepen half naakt en half gekleed langs de weg; en de voornaamste Heeren en Dames zijn in hunne onderkleederen ten Huizen uytgevoelden, dewyl men in die angstvalligheid om geen Lichaams dekking bedagt was. Werwaerds men het oog ook wende, overal zag men Huizen insinken, en onder derzelve Puyshoopen ontelbare Menschen die zig nog met de vlingt dagten te salveeren, elendig ongekoomen: Ja zelfs, wanneer men in die ontweening der geklede natuur, by zyn volkome zinnen en verstand was gebleeven, zoude men geen plaats hebben konnen uydenken om zig te bergen, dewyl men overal de dood als met opgepalpte Kaaken te gemoet zag. Hier zag men menschen door de Aardbeving op de Straaten ter neder geworpen, en gints een meenigte die door den zwaren damp, veroorzaakt door het insinken der Huizen, waren verflukt; want dewyl dit ongelukkig toeval geschied is juist ter zelve tyd dat men in alle de voornaamste Huizen toebereidelen tot de Keuken maakte, en waar toe groote Vuuren benodigd zijn sloeg de Brand gints en weder, waar door alles in ligte laaye Vlam geraakte. Het Bloedbad by het Stormenderhand innemen van een Stad, is zoo afschrykelyk niet als de Aardbeving die men hier heeft uytheftan: by het eerste heeft men zig maar tegen Menschen, die schoon zegewapend en verwoed zijn, defendeeren; maar by het laatste moet men zig om io te spreken tegen de natuur aankanten, dewelke den ondergang der menschen zoo 't schynt bevooroordeeld had. Deze stad had in desselfs omtrek 3 gebergens alle met huizen omringeld, en van dezelve zijn 'er maar weynige, uytgenomen die de

welke zeer hoog stonden staande gebleeven, dewelke naderhand door den brand zijn verterd geworden; de alhier zig bevindende Engelse Koopluden hebben het meeste geleden, dewyl dezelve de grootste tak van negotie uitmaakten, als hebbende vercheyde Magazynen welke opgepropt waren met allerhande koopmanfchappen; en dewyl dezelve aan den voet van het gebergte lagen, om digt by de rivier te wezen, zijn ze alle, met menschen en de daar in zynde koftbaarheden weg gepeeld: drie honderd Paters Jesuiten wierden met hunnen huizen verflonden. De gevangenen van de Inquisite zig van hunne scpiers verlaten vindende openden hunne hokken, en hebben van de verwarring geprofiteerd om een onmenschelyke wraak over hunne Regters te nemen. Tot groot geluk bevond zig de Koning in zyn Lust Paleys van Belem, 't welk zyn Majesteit langs den Oever van de Taag heeft doen bouwen: Het Paleys het welk die Vorst in die stad had, is ten eenemaal verwoest, invoege die Monarch by alden hy zig nog aldaar had opgehouden, zekerlyk het Leeven zoude verloorren hebben; Deezze verschrikkelyke verwoesting is in mindst dan 10 minuten tyds geschied: Uyt de Huizen die hi laast om ver zijn gevallen, zijn de lewoonders ter naauwer nood ongekomen. Het geen de onnoemelyke Schande nog meer vergroot, is, dat de Brazilische Vloot met dewelke Confidable Schatten zijn overgekomen, kort voor het ongevall op de Taag gearriveert was, en dat men nog de Diamanten, nog het Zilver of het Goud, met dezelve overgebragt, zal konnen weder vinden. Vercheyde Engelse en Portugese Schepen op de Rivier leggende zijn door het Woeden der Golven op de Eroegens gecommet. Het kleyn getal menschen die 't geluk getroffen hebben zig buyten de Stad te konnen retireeren, begaaven zig zommige byna geheel naakt en andere gekleed, na een groote Vlakte niet verre van de Stad; en onder vercheyde Perzoonen van Distinctie zag men de Franche Ambassadeur in zyn Onderkleeren, nevens dertsef Genesin dewelke maar een Los Kleed had aangetrokken; de andere Dames van aanzien zagen 'er veel ongechoeyter uyt, als hebbende geen de minste tyd gehad om het een of het ander aan te doen. De Menschen hebben 3 daagen lang onder Tenten dewelke men op de bovengemelde Vlakte had opgejaagen, Huys gehouden; de Koning zelfs heeft zig gedurende de tyd zoo in 't open Veld als in 't Ryusig moeten behelpen. Door de groote wanorde en Confusie is 'er niet aan 't bezorgen van Leevensmiddelen gedagt, invoege omtrent 200 duysend menschen dewelke op meergemelde Vlakte zaamen gevloeyd waren, meer dan 24 uren lang aldaar geweest zijn, zonder een brokje brood te konnen genieten. De Koning van Spanjen van dezze algemene beheffigheid aan Leevensmiddelen onderrigt geworden zynde heeft zyne Onderdaanen gelaft om Provisien te zenden na de Plaats daar Lissabon gejaagen heeft, zonder enig geld daar voor te eyschen. Door de zware alternatie en uythongering vielen veele Menschen in slaauwte, maar wanneer men Karren en Waagens en volgeladene Vaartuygen met Leevensmiddelen zag aankoomen vielen men daar op met de uytterste greeghedyd aan, zig verbecindende dat het uyt den Hemel was toegezonden. Enige onverzageerde Perzoonen hebben zig onderdaan na de ruynen dezer Stad te begeeven alwaar zy nog het gekerm van Mannen, Vrouwen en Kinderen die ten halven vermoord zijn, aan te hooren. De Aardbeving is gedurende 10 uren tyds vercheyde maalen gevoeld, esdg zyn de zwareste schuddingen in de 10 eerste minuten geweest. Ook is Brand ontstaan in de Huizen die nog Staande waren gebleeven, en dewelke men niet heeft konnen blifchen.

Te Groningen, by JACOBUS SIPKES, Drukker  
en Boekverkoper aan de Boter-Markt in de Blauwe-Engel. 1755.

FIGURE 1.2 De Voorlooper van de Groninger Dingsdaagsche Courant [The Forerunner of the Groningen Tuesday Newspaper]. Copy in Universiteitsbibliotheek Groningen (University Library Groningen).



the Lisbon harbour on 28 October in his 2 December edition, but a list of Dutch survivors only in the 9 December edition (presumably reflecting the timing of information reaching the editor himself).<sup>31</sup> Although family members of seamen and merchants were used to waiting for long periods for signs of life, this must have been nerve-racking. Another Haarlem edition, and also a Delft one, explained, in a report from England, why above all many Protestant merchants had been saved; they had been outside Lisbon during the catastrophe as they wanted to avoid encounters with the Portuguese Catholics who were celebrating All Saints' Day.<sup>32</sup> This was a soothing message for Dutch Protestants.

Relying on the newspapers for information, the Dutch authorities and population did not immediately offer aid to the Portuguese victims of the disaster, such aid, of course, not being as easy to organize as it is today. The Dutch Estates-General publicly showed their compassion to the Portuguese king rather late compared with official reactions from several other European countries. This can probably be explained by the fact that it took a few weeks before contacts had been restored with the Dutch envoy in Lisbon.<sup>33</sup> Although envoy Bosc de la Calmette had to pass on the Dutch sympathy and an offer to help the Portuguese, his instructions do not seem to have been supported by everybody in the Protestant world. Within Protestant circles, the idea was transmitted that the Lisbon earthquake was God's punishment of the – in their opinion – “sinful Roman Catholic Portuguese citizens.” It was alleged that it was not by chance that almost all Lisbon Protestants had been saved; they had been outside the city during All Saints' Day.<sup>34</sup>

Of all the Dutch newspapers, the *Hollandsche Historische Courant* included the highest number of news accounts and letters about the Lisbon earthquake.<sup>35</sup> An explanation why the Delft newspaper squeezed the subject dry is perhaps that it simply had more space for news items as it did not have as many advertisements as the newspapers of bigger cities such as Amsterdam

31 Other news items with names of merchants or ships: *AC*, 6, 9, and 13 December 1755; *LeyC*, 5, 8, 10, and 31 December 1755; *HHC*, 9 December; *LC*, 13 December 1755; *sGrC*, 22 December 1755.

32 *OHC* and *HHC*, 11 December 1755.

33 Mentioned in *AC* en *HHC*, 27 December 1755.

34 Buisman, “Het bevend Nederland,” pp. 33–35; Matthias Georgi, *Heuschrecken, Erdbeben und Komenten: Naturkatastrophen und Naturwissenschaft in der englischen Öffentlichkeit des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: August Dreesbach Verlag, 2009), pp. 148–168; see also id., “The Lisbon Earthquake and Scientific Knowledge in the British Public Sphere” in Braun and Radner (eds.), *The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755*, pp. 81–96.

35 See earlier footnotes and the many quoted letters received from Lisbon via England in *HHC*, 23, 25, and 27 December 1755.

and The Hague. Furthermore the Delft editor may have hoped to attract more readers with this sensational topic.

### Sources and Routes

Many details are still unclear about how early modern newspaper editors gathered, selected, and edited their news sources. In their newspapers they systematically reveal only the geographic origin of their news items. Most of the reports in Dutch newspapers appear under a country name and start with a so-called dateline: a city name and a date.<sup>36</sup> Only a small portion of them include information about how the news message was received or the quality of the source. These start with phrases such as, "With a Courier who arrived from LISBON here (in Madrid) on the 8th of this month the regrettable tidings has been received,"<sup>37</sup> "Private LETTER from LONDON of 28 November,"<sup>38</sup> or "Summary from a letter of Captain Jan Pynappel with the date of the 11th of this [month] written from Tessel to his book-keeper here."<sup>39</sup> In his 23 December 1755 edition the Delft editor even started with this extensive introduction:

Several letters from Lisbon have been received with the latest letters from London of 16 this [month], at that place arrived with the packet boat, there already expected for several days. It is our opinion that those letters deserve to be communicated word-for-word as they are true and recent, and among them the following LETTER, *written by Sir ABRAHAM CASTRES*, the King of Great Britain's *Envoy Extr[aordinary]* at the King of Portugal, dated LISBON 6 November 1755, seems to be suitable as the first one.<sup>40</sup>

36 In 1752 the *Leeuwarder Courant* was the first Dutch newspaper that published its news items thematically.

37 In Dutch: "Met een Courier, dewelke den 8 dezer Maand van LISBON alhier (te Madrid) gearriveert is, heeft men de beklaglyke tyding ontvangen." *LeyC*, 28 November 1755.

38 In Dutch: "Particuliere BRIEF van LONDEN den 28 November." *LeyC*, 5 December 1755.

39 In Dutch: "Extract uit een brief van Kapt. Jan Pynappel in dato den 11 dezer uit Tessel [Texel] aen zyn boekhouder alhier [Amsterdam] geschreeven." *AC*, 13 December 1755.

40 Quote in Dutch: "Met de jongste brieven van Londen van den 16 deezer heeft men verscheide brieven van Lisbon ontfangen, aldaar ingekomen in de pakketboot, dewelke men aldaar reeds voor eenige dagen had verwacht. Die brieven verdienen na 't ons toeschynt ter oorzaake van hare echtheid en jongere dagteekening, dat we dezelve van woord tot woord meedeedeelen, en onder deeze komt billyk in de eerste plaats voor de volgende BRIEF, *geschreeven door den heer ABRAHAM CASTRES, extr[aordinair] envoyé des konings van Groot-Brittannie by den koning van Portugal, gedagteekent LISBON den 6 november 1755.*" *HHC*, 23 December 1755.

In this way newspaper editors tried to convince their readers at least as much as possible that they presented reliable information.<sup>41</sup> In his 8 December 1755 issue, for example, the Leiden editor stated that he quoted “very credible messages” about Lisbon. Actually, such phrases were still vague.<sup>42</sup>

Many early modern news media used the same – frequently scarce – sources, or copied messages from each other.<sup>43</sup> This was already illustrated above with the news messages about the earthquake in Madrid, which were almost identical. Although newspaper editors used other newspapers as welcome sources for their own purposes, most of the time they concealed this way of gathering news. At best they only mentioned them in general terms, such as the Haarlem editor did in his report about the rise of the water in surrounding Dutch cities, which he introduced with the words “today’s newspapers state.”<sup>44</sup> The reproduction in Dutch newspapers of a letter coming from the papal nuncio in Portugal is another characteristic example. The nuncio had dated his letter to his Spanish colleague with the words, “From the place where Lisbon was situated formerly,” a dramatic phrase that Dutch editors must have considered a very suitable quotation for specifying the horrible circumstances.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, it is significant that all Dutch newspapers with information about the tidal surges and earthquake mentioned – apart from Lisbon – the same cities: Glückstadt, Travemünde, Portsmouth, Bordeaux, Madrid, Cadiz, Malaga, and a few other cities around the Mediterranean, even though many other European cities had also experienced the rising water.<sup>46</sup> This confirms the assumption that the Dutch editors copied the news from each other and from the same foreign newspapers, all depending on a limited supply of news

41 Marcel Broersma, “A Daily Truth: the Persuasive Power of Early Modern Newspapers” in Joop W. Koopmans and Nils Holger Petersen (eds.), *Commonplace Culture in Western Europe in the Early Modern Period III: Legitimation of Authority* (Leuven, Paris, and Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2011), pp. 19–34.

42 See also *AC*, 13 December 1755, in which a rumour is surely denied.

43 See, e.g., Will Slauter, “Le paragraphe mobile: circulation et transformation des informations dans le monde atlantique du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 67 (2012), pp. 363–389.

44 In Dutch: “In de Niews-papieren van heden word gemeld[.]” *OHC*, 4 November 1755.

45 *UC*, 28 November 1755; *RoC*, 29 November 1755; *OGC*, 2 December 1755; *LC*, 6 December 1755. Cf. Saada and Sgard, “Tremblements,” p. 218.

46 Reports about the rise of the water in cities and regions published in only one Dutch newspaper: *HHC*, 18, 20, 22, 25, and 27 November: about Hamburg, Cuxhaven, and surrounding cities, Cork and Kinsale in Ireland, Tenterden in Kent (England), Lunden (Schleswig-Holstein), and Swansea (Wales); *OHC*, 11 December 1755: about Swedish Falun; *AC*, 23 December: from Stockholm about the Norwegian coast.

sources. Only well-established newspapers could afford to have correspondents abroad.<sup>47</sup>

Another topic with many uncertainties concerns the routes of the news. In this case, how did the Lisbon news reach the Netherlands? Dutch newspapers at the time of the earthquake show that most news items were received via or from Madrid, Paris, and London. The Haarlem and Rotterdam newspapers, for example, derived and quoted the first news about the Portuguese earthquake from Paris, where letters from Lisbon had been received.<sup>48</sup> This corresponds with the existing mail services of the 1750s, which news suppliers must have used. The Dutch Republic did not have direct postal connections with Portugal. A combination of French and Spanish postal services was generally employed. This route could easily have delays because of the different parties involved. Before 1760, post between Lisbon and Madrid was only sent once a week. This was another reason why the sending of news-letters from Portugal overland to the Netherlands, and vice versa, took much time. During the seventeenth century a few attempts to establish a direct sea connection between the Dutch Republic and Portugal had failed because they were not profitable enough.<sup>49</sup>

It will be clear that the sending of news accounts from Lisbon to the outside world was interrupted during the first chaotic days after the earthquake. One author sighed – as quoted in the Leiden newspaper – that he had found only one piece of paper, and that with difficulty, so he could not write up a complete story.<sup>50</sup> However, very soon couriers travelled between Lisbon and Madrid to inform the Spanish court about the situation in Portugal. The king of Spain, Ferdinand VI, appeared to be uneasy and showed great sympathy towards the Portuguese victims, as his sister Mariana Victoria was married to Portugal's king, Joseph I. Ferdinand also sent couriers to Portugal to gather information. This partially explains why the Spanish capital became an important link in

47 In 1738 the *OHC*, for example, had foreign correspondents in Vienna, Paris, Hamburg, London, Rome, Frankfurt, Cologne, Brussels, and Venice. See Dirk H. Couvée, "The Administration of the 'Oprechte Haarlemse Courant' 1738–1742," *Gazette: International Journal of the Science of the Press etc.*, 4 (1958), pp. 91–110, at 103, 106.

48 *OHC* and *RoC*, 27 November 1755. Cf. Saada and Sgard, "Tremblements," p. 212.

49 Overvoorde, *Geschiedenis van het postwezen*, pp. 247–250. He asserts that in 1755, Holland experimented with a connection from England over sea to Lisbon as a temporary solution to high French and Spanish postage costs. Overvoorde does not mention the time of year in which the experiment took place, therefore it is not clear if there is a connection between the experiment and the dissemination of the earthquake news.

50 *LeyC*, 12 December 1755. Longer quote in Dutch: "Ik heb met moeite een blaadje Papier weeten te krygen, om het weinig, 't geen ik schryf te melden; zoo dat, al wilde ik, het onmooglyk zouw zyn een uitvoerig Verhaal te geeven."

the dissemination of the Portuguese news.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, diplomats and merchants who had survived the catastrophe tried to reach their masters as soon as possible. Many quotations from their letters reached the newspapers, since their content was considered less private than it would be nowadays.

More or less regular connections between Lisbon and other parts of Europe were restored within a few weeks after 1 November 1755. An anonymous letter from Lisbon, dated 11 November, opens with the news that the author had not been able to write earlier as the post had been disturbed until then.<sup>52</sup> Datelines such as “Belem [the remaining royal residence] near Lisbon, 19 November” also show that postal connections between Portugal and the outside world were being used again during the second half of the month.<sup>53</sup> The Utrecht newspaper illustrates this with the fact that the earthquake news was summarized with the help of letters from Madrid prior to the 8 December edition, which included Portuguese news of about one month before. Yet in the subsequent Utrecht edition of 10 December, the editor mentioned that letters written in Lisbon had been received in the Netherlands. He commented, however, that those letters were still very “abrupt,” and so it was not yet possible to make one continuous story. Besides, it is illustrative that the Utrecht newspaper included the heading “Portugal” for the first time after the earthquake news had started, only in its 12 December edition.<sup>54</sup>

In the meantime, Dutch newspaper readers must have observed that the sea route between Portugal and England became important in disseminating news about Lisbon. Many news items about the disaster were received from London and appeared in the Dutch newspapers under the headings “Great Britain” or “England.” The Delft newspaper with the first report about the Lisbon devastations also included a message about earthquakes in Oporto, which had been received in the Downs from a returning ship called Weston.<sup>55</sup> On 2 December, the Haarlem newspaper mentioned that everybody was very much looking forward to the English letters that had been sent via the packet boat from Lisbon to Falmouth.

A combination of land and sea routes was also possible. A report in the Rotterdam newspaper of 4 December about the situation in Lisbon, published

51 Spanish troops escorted these news couriers after four of them had been murdered by highwaymen in Portugal, where plundering had started after the disaster. *HHC*, 20 December 1755. Cf. Saada and Sgard, “Tremblements,” pp. 216, 218.

52 *LeyC*, 15 December 1755; also *HHC*, 16 December 1755.

53 *RoC*, 23 December 1755.

54 The first news under the heading “Portugal” in the Amsterdam newspaper was published on 20 December, with the dateline “Belem, not far away from the ruins of Lisbon.”

55 This message was published under the heading “Great Britain.” *HHC*, 27 November 1755.

under “England” and with a London dateline, included news selected from letters posted in Madrid and Paris. In this case the news travelled from Lisbon, via Madrid or Paris, to London, and from London to Rotterdam.<sup>56</sup> The same account anxiously revealed that the English packet boat that should have left the Lisbon harbour on 2 or 3 November had not arrived with letters from British diplomats and merchants.<sup>57</sup>

Dutch news editors could further rely on information originating from Dutch ships that had returned safely from Lisbon harbour to the Netherlands. On 3 December, for example, the Leiden newspaper published a story about the earthquake, recounted by Cornelis Cornelisz and Hans Piet Mooy, two Dutchmen who had returned to Amsterdam two days earlier. In this case the editor mentioned the names of the authors, which must have given the news report more authority than letters from unknown foreigners. At the same time this ensured everybody knew that both men were out of danger.

### Speculation, Reflection, and the Concept of Contemporaneity

Unclear and incomplete news always leads to speculation and uncertainty. This was no different in 1755, when the sudden rise of the water on 1 November could not be immediately explained. People at the time had to be far more patient than today. They were familiar with the idea that rumours could not be researched or confirmed at once. This does not mean, of course, that they did not reflect on and react to unaccountable news items. It is obvious to assume, for instance, that clever newspaper readers in the Netherlands soon connected their own ‘tsunami’ with news that reached the country about the unexpected tidal surges and earthquakes abroad. Yet only slowly – after having read subsequent newspaper issues – would it become clear that their natural phenomenon had its origin in the southwestern part of Europe, as the rise of the water had been noticed in the south of England at 10:30 AM, in the north of the Netherlands around 11:00 AM, and in Baltic harbours at noon. Later news reports about the earthquake in Bordeaux mentioned 10:15 AM, thus earlier than the tidal wave arrived in England and the Netherlands.<sup>58</sup>

56 This sea route is missing on the map of diffusion routes in Saada and Sgard, “Tremblements,” p. 217.

57 Also *AC*, 4 December 1755.

58 See, e.g., *OGC*, 4, 14, and 18 November 1755; *OHC*, 22 November 1755. See also *HHC*, 2 December 1755, in which the time differences are explained.

Curiosity about the possible explanations for the sudden change of the water level must have been one of the readers' main reactions as long as the real cause of the phenomenon was unclear. Next to the newspaper reports, in which this curiosity was also noticed, this also led to other types of publications with possible answers to people's questions about the phenomenon. Smart editors responded to their readers' curiosity by publishing pamphlets purporting to explain the floods and earthquakes: texts with 'scientific' pretensions and dominant religious ideas as well. The editor of the *Leeuwarder Courant*, Abraham Ferwerda, published such a pamphlet very quickly, which he announced in the Leiden newspaper of 14 November and his own newspaper issue of the 15 November, its long title starting, "Historische en Natuurkundige Aanmerkingen over de zeldzame AARD- en WATER-SCHUDDINGE" [Historical and physical comments about the rare trembling of the earth and the water].

Ferwerda's pamphlet was written by "J.G.M.," initials standing for the Lutheran clergyman Johan Georg Muller, and was for sale in many Dutch cities for the price of five Dutch stivers. The clerical hand is immediately visible in the leaflet's opening sentence, in which the author proclaims that God reminds people of His omnipotence via natural phenomena, in this case an earthquake. After many pages with information about earthquakes, and highly incorrect geological explanations, Muller tries to explain the 1755 trembling of the earth by the winds, the oceans, the geographical peculiarities of the Netherlands, and subterranean water passages with underground disturbances. He frightens the reader with his conclusion that the Dutch soil could suddenly sink into the waters of the sea at any moment, if this is God's will.

According to the editor, Muller's pamphlet was very popular. In Ferwerda's announcement of the third edition, he mentioned that 1500 copies had been sold within a week.<sup>59</sup> A few weeks after the Lisbon news had become known, the Leeuwarden newspaper announced a pamphlet in which Muller's text was criticized.<sup>60</sup> This is another indication that the topic was popular. The weight of the godly dimension and religious ideology in people's reflection on the disaster can also be illustrated by Muller's subsequent pamphlet, in which

59 *LC*, 29 November 1755. In the *LC*'s 6 December announcement, the author's full name was revealed. See also *HHC*, 13 December 1755, about Utrecht physicists who tried to explain the earthquake.

60 B.J.M.D. [Bern. Idema, Med. Dr.], *Historische en natuurkundige tegenwerpingen tegens de historische en natuurkundige aanmerkingen over de aard- en waterschuddinge van den 1 november 1755 etc.* (Heerenveen: A. Posthumus, 1755). *LC*, 6 December 1755.

the author used the Lisbon earthquake as a warning and sign that the end of the world was near.<sup>61</sup>

During November and December several news pamphlets accompanied the newspapers' accounts, such as the *Beschryving van Lissabon* etc. [Description of Lisbon], published by the Leiden bookseller Hendrik van der Deyster. This publication included an account about the water movements in the Netherlands and the earthquake in Portugal. Another characteristic example is the *Chronykje of naauwkeurige beschryvinge der aard-beevinge, of waterbeweeginge*, etc. [Short chronicle or meticulous report about the earthquake or water movement, etc.]. This small leaflet, printed by Jacobus van Egmont's widow in Amsterdam at the end of 1755, repeated all the news that had been published in the Dutch newspapers about the subject. This shows that the market for news lasted beyond the initial rush to buy corantos and gazettes. After all, it was, of course, easier to reflect on earlier reports that had been published across several newspapers when they were published together in one document. Easy remembering and retrieving of the news would also become possible in the subsequent year when news periodicals, such as the *Europische Mercurius* [European Mercury], summarized the newspapers' accounts.<sup>62</sup>

Brendan Dooley has asserted that the idea of contemporaneity emerged when international communication networks started to function. He claims that despite:

frequent delays, shifting borders, linguistic barriers, unreliable carriers and differences in the reckoning of time, Europeans began to share a knowledge of one another and of events in the world taking place in the present.<sup>63</sup>

From the perspective of early modern news, it is interesting to note that this awareness was indeed present in the Dutch newspapers of 1755 that reported on the Lisbon earthquake and tsunami. News reports about the

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61 Johan Georg Muller, *Voor-tekenen van de nabyheit van het vergaan der wereld en van den jongsten dag, opgemaakt ter gelegenheit van de vreeszelyke aardbevinge en waterschud-dinge te Lissabon, de Nederlanden en elders, voorgesteld ter waarschuwinge en Christelyke toebereidinge* (Leeuwarden: Abraham Ferwerda, 1755), announced in *LC*, 20 December 1755.

62 *Nederlandsch gedenkboek of Europische Mercurius etc.* 66/2 [July–November] (1755), pp. 285–290, 294–312.

63 Dooley, *Dissemination of News*, p. xiii.



same events reached the Netherlands from various corners of Europe, and Dutch newspaper editors combined their contents. A characteristic observation can be found in the *Hollandsche Historische Courant*, in which the Delft editor observes that the “shaking of the water” was not only mentioned in letters from Friesland, Groningen, and other provinces, but also in Glückstadt, Travemünde, and Portsmouth. He concluded that the circumstances were the same everywhere.<sup>64</sup>

In this case, however, with the Netherlands as a reference point, we have to be aware that the effects of the Lisbon earthquake – the tsunami and its consequences – were noticed and known in a large northern European area weeks before the news about the earthquake was known all over that same area. This means that we still have to distinguish several stages and circles of early modern contemporaneity, dependent on the potential speed of news at the time: first a more or less simultaneously existing and relatively small circle of news readers, who received information about what had happened nearby at the same time and not long after; and afterwards, expanding groups of news readers who did not get the news at the same time because it had not taken place nearby. The question is whether or not those expanding groups can still be considered as one circle of people who shared a feeling of contemporaneity. After all, the larger the area became, the fewer people shared in the experience of reading about the same news simultaneously. It was only after having read such news that people could have a shared memory of the event. In the end, such a memory could be intensified by syntheses of news that were published in pamphlets and news periodicals.

### Final Remarks

This chapter deals with the dissemination of news from the south of Europe to the Dutch Republic, half way through the eighteenth century, focused on the subject of the Lisbon earthquake and tsunami of 1755. News about the sudden tidal surges on 1 November 1755 reached Dutch newspaper readers from a

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64 Quote in Dutch: “Niet alleen verneemt men ook met brieven uit Vriesland, Groningen en andere provintien deezer republik, dat diergelyke waterschuddinge aldaar op 't zelve oogenblik meede is bespeurt, maar ook melden die van Gluckstadt, Travemunde, enz. in 't Holsteinsche, alsmeede die van Portsmouth in Engeland; enz., dat men niet zonder verbaastheid aldaar meede die waterbeweeging vernomen heeft, komende de omstandigheeden, die uit alle plaatzen gemeld worden, dewelken dat zonderlinge geval verzelt hebben, alle genoegzaam met elkander overëen.” *HHC*, 13 November 1755.

surrounding area that slowly expanded, depending on the postal infrastructure and means of transport in Europe at the time. Several routes – over land (via Spain, France, and the Southern Netherlands) and by sea (via England or directly from Portugal) – were used to carry news from the earthquake area to the Dutch Republic. Dutch newspaper editors were very eager to publish the earthquake reports as soon as possible, however, they could not confirm rumours easily and to do this they had to rely on uncertain sources. Many news items were copied from other newspapers, with all the mistakes they included.

Another implication of the speed of early modern news carriers was that the Lisbon earthquake was topical for the Dutch about a month after the disaster had taken place. In the meantime they could only speculate about the explanations for what had happened in their own region. This is substantially different from the situation of today, in which we hear world news immediately via all kinds of media. Considering that early modern Europeans did not have so many news channels as we have today, and that their media had to rely on a relatively small supply of news sources (in many countries even state controlled), we may perhaps conclude that their knowledge was based more on common sources than is the case today. However, thorough research has yet to be done to verify this aspect of ‘European contemporaneity’ and to address the question: to what extent were news reports in Europe simply copied from foreign newspapers? This type of research will hopefully become easier when more European newspapers have been digitized.

## Appendix

News messages about the earthquake in Madrid in 1755 in Dutch newspapers, with almost the same content and structure, also printed in *La Gazette de Cologne* on 21 November 1755 as follows:

*De Madrid, le 3 novembre.* Le 1<sup>er</sup> de ce mois, à 10 heures et 17 ou 18 minutes du matin, nous avons eu ici pendant 4 minutes un violent tremblement de terre, qui a endommagé plusieurs édifices et coûté la vie à 2 enfants écrasés par la chute d’une croix de pierre du frontispice d’une église. On apprend de plusieurs villes des environs, qu’on y en a aussi ressenti les secousses et qu’en particulier elles ont été très vives à l’Escorial, d’où la Cour partit subitement peu après pour revenir ici.<sup>65</sup>

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65 Quoted in Saada and Sgard, “Tremblements,” pp. 210–211.

[*From Madrid, 3 November.* The 1st of this month, at 17 or 18 minutes past 10 in the morning, we had a violent trembling of the earth for 4 minutes, which has damaged several buildings and cost the lives of 2 children who have been crushed by the fall of a stone crucifix of a church's frontispiece. It is said in several surrounding cities that people also felt the earthquake shocks, and in particular they were severe in the Escorial, from whence the Court immediately returned here.]

As it took about five days before news from Cologne was printed in Dutch newspapers,<sup>66</sup> it seems almost impossible that the Dutch newspapers copied the report from the Cologne gazette. They must have had a common source. The *Amsterdamse Courant*, *Leydse Courant*, and *Oprechte Groninger Courant* did not publish this report.

's *Gravenhaegse Courant*, 24 November 1755: MADRID, DEN 3 NOVEMBER. Eergisteren morgen, even over half elf uren [half past ten], heeft men hier een zwaere schudding van een Aerdbeeving gevoeld, waer door veel schade aen verscheyde Huyzen veroorzaekt is, en onder andere zyn twee Kinderen door een steene Kruys, van een onzer Kerken, dat van boven naer beneeden storte, verpletterd. Men meend dat deeze Schudding byna overal, dog voornamentlyk op 't Escuriael, gevoeld was, van waer het Hof in alle spoed herwaerts geretourneerd is.

*Utrechtse Courant*, 24 November 1755: MADRID den 3 November. Eergisteren morgen ten 10 uren en 17 a 18 minuten, had men alhier gedurende 4 minuten een geweldige Aerdbeving, waer door verscheide Gebouwen beschadigt, en 2 Kinderen door het vallen van een Kruis van de Spits van een Kerk verplettert zyn. Uit verscheide naburige Steden verneemt men, dat aldaer die Aerdbeving mede gevoelt, en inzonderheid in't Escuriael zeer hevig geweest is, weshalven het Hof kort 'er na haestig van daer vertrok om herwaerts te keeren.

*Rotterdamse Courant*, 25 November 1755: MADRID den 3 November. Den 1 deeser 's morgens 17 à 18 Minuten na 10 uren, hebben wy hier geduurende den tyd van 4 Minuten een geweldige Aardbeving gehad, die eenige Huysen beschadigt, en aan 2 Kinderen die het vallen van een Steene Kruys van boven het Frontispice van een Kerk verplettert zyn, het leven gekost heeft. Uyt verscheyde omleggende Steden verneemt men, dat de Schuddingen aldaar ook zyn gevoeld, en dat se vooral te Escuriael seer hevig zyn geweest, van waar het Hof kort daar aan seer subitelyk vertrok, om herwaerts terug te komen.

66 Koopmans, "Supply and Speed," p. 200.

*Opreche Haerlemse Courant*, 25 November 1755: MADRID den 3 November. Saturdag ochtend ten 10 Uuren en 17 of 18 Minuten hebben wy hier eene sterke Aardbeving gevoeld, welke 4 minuten geduurd, verscheydene Gebouwen beschadigd en twee Kinderen door het afwerpen van een Steenen Kruys van 't Portaal eener Kerk gedood heeft. In verscheydene andere Steden en Plaatsen hieromstreeks is dezelfde insgelyks gevoeld, en wel voornamentlyk in 't Escuriaal van waar het Hof immediaat daarop na deze Residentie terugkeerde.

*Hollandsche Historische Courant* [Delft], 25 November 1755: MADRID den 3 November. Den eersten deezer 's morgens ten 10 uuren, 17 à 18 min., hebben we hier een zware aardbeving gehad, die 4 minuten geduurt heeft, waardoor verscheide gebouwen beschadigt, en 2 kinderen onder een afgevallen kruis van den voorgevel van een der kerken verplettert zyn, en uit verscheide andere steeden verneemt men, dat men die aardbeving aldaar insgelyks heeft gevoelt, en inzonderheid in 't Escuriaal, verzelt van zware schokkingen in het water.

*Leeuwarder Courant*, 29 November 1755: Madrid den 3 November Eergisteren morgen om half elf uuren [half past ten], heeft men hier een zware schudding van een Aardbeving gevoeld, waar door veel schade aan verscheide Huizen veroorzaakt is, en onder andere twee Kinderen, door een steene Kruis, van een onzer Kerken, dat van boven na beneden stortte, verplettert. Men verneemt dat deze Schudding byna overal, dog voornamentlyk op't Escuriaal, gevoeld was, van waar het Hof in alle spoed herwaarts geretourneert is.

## “Wee have Tidings out of Polonia”

*English Corantos, News Networks, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*<sup>1</sup>

*Anna Kalinowska*

In the latest study of London's news press during the Thirty Years' War, Jayne E.E. Boys – having inspected the datelines of the English corantos – argues, rightly, that as far as news transmission in early modern Europe is concerned, news generally tended to travel towards England through the Continent in a north-westerly direction. This statement is followed by a more detailed analysis of the issue:

The oldest news came from the central and eastern Habsburg lands and from Italy and Constantinople. German news came next. The freshest news was usually Dutch, though news from France, the Spanish Netherlands and Westphalia, when it was available, was seldom more than few days older and was often added at the end. News from places north of the Netherlands, such as Denmark and Sweden appeared less frequently, and via a variety of routs, but the activities of Danish and Swedish troops in Germany were eagerly reported.<sup>2</sup>

Surprisingly, in this description, Boys completely ignores the largest European state of the period, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, even though there are nearly 200 reports coming from or dealing with Poland-Lithuania, containing more than 250 news items, between 1620 and 1641.<sup>3</sup> This may be an unimpressive number when compared with, for example Germany or the Netherlands, but it is definitely enough to argue that, in spite of the geographical distance, the coranto readers were not only aware of Poland-Lithuania's

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- 1 The research for the article was made possible by funding from The National Science Centre (project number N N108 148539).
  - 2 Jayne E.E. Boys, *London's News Press and the Thirty Years War* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), p. 43.
  - 3 The earliest report referring to Poland that I have managed to identify was published in late December 1620, while the last one comes from January 1641, although it is possible that there was some Polish news printed between 1618 and 1620.

existence, but also were in a position to form their own opinions on this country based on what they had read in these publications.

The aim of this chapter is to analyse these reports and answer two main questions. Firstly, about their contents and the contexts in which the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was presented to the English readers, and secondly about this country's place in the early European news networks used by the coranto editors.

Before starting this analysis one must stress the low survival figures for the news press publications from this period, the decline in publishing of news in the late 1620s, and Charles I's ban on corantos issued in late 1632. Due to these factors, in the case of Poland-Lithuania one can use a quantitative approach in only a very limited way, which would be more to trace general trends than to take advantage of it as an accurate research method for detailed queries. For example, the gap generated by the ban of 1632 means that we have no reports dealing with the war with Muscovy that started that year, which makes it very difficult to show in a reliable way how Polish-Muscovite relations were described by the corantos during the more than 20 year period we are interested in. Similarly, it seems almost impossible to make any strong arguments based on comparisons of the numbers of reports and the frequency with which the news from Poland-Lithuania and other countries was published. That is something that can be done by the researchers dealing with some of the 1650s newsbooks and the *London Gazette* as they have complete sets of numbers at their disposal.

It is still possible, however, to follow the main topics that reappear in subsequent reports and which unquestionably played an important role in the presentation of Poland-Lithuania to the English reading audience. Out of 254 identifiable news items, nearly half (122) dealt with military issues; 98 focused on politics (of which 48 dealt with diplomacy); 6 on religious problems; 5 on economy; and 23 did not belong to any of these categories. This basically means that when we look at the reports as a whole we can see the massive domination of information on military and diplomatic topics.

This, however, is not surprising. Firstly because these were exactly the type of newsworthy events favoured by the early modern press.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, as is generally agreed, the Thirty Years' War was one of the main triggers for the development of, and was the main subject covered by, the early English news press.<sup>5</sup> The Polish-Lithuanian state, although officially neutral, was in fact politically

4 Barbara J. Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact: England, 1550–1720* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2000), p. 87.

5 The English public became particularly interested in developments on the Continent when in 1618 the Estates of Bohemia elected James I's son-in-law, Frederick, as their king. Conflict

and militarily involved in the conflict. As a result, its military and political relations with the Habsburgs, Sweden, the Ottoman Empire, and other neighbours had a significant impact on the situation in East Central Europe in the 1620s and early 1630s, and therefore were important for Frederick V's supporters.

Nearly half of all the military news dealt with Poland-Lithuania's conflicts with Turkey and the Tartars, which can be partly explained by the fact that the conflict reached its peak exactly at the same time that corantos were becoming more popular. In addition, the survival rate for this particular period, i.e. the early 1620s, is relatively good. As early as December of 1620, the corantos informed their readership of the Polish defeat at Cecora,<sup>6</sup> while in September 1623 the readers could learn that the Turkish army had:

already plundered the Country for the space of a hundred miles together, doing so much mischief, as the Polish Chronicles have no example of so much misery done in any one Invasion, and the number of Polish losses exceeded 20 thousand people.<sup>7</sup>

The Tartars, who usually were the Sultan's closest allies, were also present in the reports as an important factor in Polish-Turkish relations.<sup>8</sup>

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in Bohemia developed into the Thirty Years' War and, with a longer perspective, also affected the internal situation of the Stuart monarchy. See Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 130–138; Boys, *London's News Press*, pp. 1–32, 63–91; Joad Raymond, "News" in Joad Raymond (ed.), *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture: Volume One: Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 380–383; id., *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks 1641–1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 6–13; Folke Dahl, "Amsterdam: Cradle of the English Newspapers", *The Library*, 5th series, 4 (1949), pp. 166–178; Sheila Lambert, "Coranto printing in England: the First Newsbooks", *Journal of Newspaper and Periodical History*, 8 (1992), pp. 3–19; Michael Frearson, "London Corantos in the 1620s", *Studies in Newspaper and Periodical History*, 1 (1993), pp. 3–17; id., "The Distribution and Readership of London Corantos in the 1620s" in Robin Myers and Michael Harris (eds.), *Serials and Their Readers, 1620–1914* (New Castle, Del.: St Paul's Bibliographies, 1993), pp. 1–25. The most important bibliography of the corantos is still Folke Dahl, *A Bibliography of English Corantos and Periodical Newsbooks, 1620–1642* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1952). In the following notes all corantos are identified by the first part of the title, date of publication, and (in brackets) the number in Dahl's Bibliography.

6 *Corrant out of Italy, Germany, &c.*, 23 December 1620 (Dahl 2), p. 1.

7 *Weekly newes*, 17 September 1623 (Dahl 128), p. 7. The report estimated that the Turkish-Tartar troops had also captured 30 thousand head of cattle and a significant number of horses.

8 *A relation of letters and other advertisement of newes...*, 27 September 1622 (Dahl 78), p. 10.

Between 1620 and 1624 alone there are more than 50 stories (both shorter and longer) about Turkish and Polish troop movements, the Sultan's military preparations for another campaign against Poland, and rumours of a possible date or reasons for the attack. But what proves that the subject would have been truly popular with the readers is the fact that in early 1622, editors decided to print a whole number entirely dedicated to recent events in the Polish-Turkish war and including detailed reports on the siege of Chocim (where the highest ranking commanders of the Polish army and the oldest son of the Polish king, Prince Wladyslaw, tried to stop the Turkish invasion). Within a few months there was another monographic number printed, dealing this time with the internal situation in the Ottoman Empire, and stressing the importance of relations with Poland-Lithuania for that country.<sup>9</sup>

Interestingly, Poland-Lithuania was very often presented in those earliest publications as the first line of defence against a Muslim invasion of Europe and still in imminent danger of being attacked. This suggests that the idea might have become popular in England earlier than it has been hitherto believed; it has been commonly considered to be a stereotypical perception of the Polish-Lithuanian state in Western Europe in the late seventeenth century.<sup>10</sup>

With time however, corantos started to put this conflict into a more diverse context. For example, they implied that another Polish-Turkish war could hamper the ability of Bethlen Gabor, Prince of Transylvania and opponent of the Emperor, to fight against the Habsburgs, as he would be supported militarily by the Sultan only when the latter was not involved in another conflict with Poland-Lithuania.<sup>11</sup>

Bethlen Gabor was also presented as an important factor in Turkish-Polish diplomatic relations – in 1624 it was reported that the Sultan's *chaush* warned

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9 The first of these publications was *Newes from Turkie and Poland* (Dahl 35), and the other is *The strangling death of great Turke and his two sonnes*, 15 July 1622 (Dahl 58).

10 One of the corantos even referred to Poland-Lithuania as "the Bulwarke of Christianity": *The strangling death of great Turke*, 15 July 1622 (Dahl 58), sig. B3. This may be connected to the growing interest in relations between the Ottoman Empire and Christian Europe that was encouraged in England by regular commercial contacts with Turkey, publication of travel accounts, and also by the Polish diplomatic mission of Jerzy Ossoliński, who in London in 1621 sought military assistance against the Turks. Politically, Ossoliński's mission was not greatly successful, but it definitely contributed to, or was possibly even the watershed moment for the way Polish-Turkish relations were perceived in England. I am grateful to Dr Martyna Mirecka for a discussion on this subject and for bringing it to my attention.

11 *Newes from the Palatine*, [early March?] 1622 (Dahl 36), p. 22; *More newes of the good successe...*, 29 July 1623 (Dahl 122), p. 2.



Sigismund III that if he provided the Emperor with any military support against Gabor, Poland-Lithuania would be immediately attacked by the Turks.<sup>12</sup> The Transylvanian ruler's military plans as regards Poland were reported again when, in 1625, Bethlen Gabor became the brother-in-law of Gustavus Adolphus, the king of Sweden. It was expected then that Gabor would now attack Poland from the South to help Gustavus Adolphus who was engaged in a war against Sigismund III in Prussia, and this possible turn of events was suggested by a series of reports published in the mid-1620s.<sup>13</sup>

The way in which this Swedish-Polish conflict – dragging on since the late sixteenth century and originating in a dynastic rift between two lines of the Vasa family – was described by the corantos had also evolved. While in 1621 the coverage of the war in Livonia was limited to a few reports and concentrated solely on military aspects,<sup>14</sup> that of the war in Prussia of 1626 was much more detailed and definitely pro-Swedish in its tenor. For example, in July 1626 one of the corantos described at length the capture of Marienburg (Malbork) by Gustavus Adolphus's army, as well as other spectacular successes of the Swedish forces, and informed the readers of their good morale and planned recruitment of further troops.<sup>15</sup> What is more, as early as April 1623, the issue was discussed in the context of the likelihood of Gustavus Adolphus's involvement in the war in Germany – on one hand it became apparent that in the case of a war with Poland, he would not be able to support the Protestants militarily, on the other, Sigismund was identified as one "who is in the Catholicic league," and so to some extent, the war could harm the Catholic camp.<sup>16</sup>

As has already been explained, very little can be found in the corantos about Poland-Lithuania's military conflict with her third neighbour, Muscovy, although the corantos did publish some reports suggesting the possibility of the breaking of the truce by the Russians,<sup>17</sup> and their efforts to build an anti-Polish military coalition with the Sultan.<sup>18</sup>

12 *Newes from Europe: with particular accidents*, 19 March 1624 (Dahl 142), p. 8.

13 E.g. in *The continuation of our weekly newes...*, 29 August 1626 (omitted by Dahl), p. 3.

14 *Corrant out of Italy...*, 21 January 1621 (Dahl 4), p. 2; *The courant out of Italy...*, 6 September 1621 (Dahl 13), p. 2; *The courant out of Italy...*, 18 September 1621 (Dahl 16), p. 2; *Corant or weekly newes...*, 11 October 1621 (Dahl 33), p. 1; *Corant or weekly newes...*, 22 October 1621 (Dahl 34), p. 2.

15 *The continuation of our weekly newes...*, 29 August 1626 (omitted by Dahl), pp. 2, 7.

16 *A relation of the last newes from severall parts of the world*, 8 April 1623 (Dahl 105), p. 18.

17 See for example, *The newes of this present weeke...*, 12 May 1623 (Dahl 111), p. 9.

18 *A relation of the late horrible treason...*, 19 February 1623 (Dahl 99), p. 27; *The continuation of our former newes*, 24 April 1623 (Dahl 108), pp. 11–12; *A relation of Count Mansfields last proceedings...*, 26 May 1623 (Dahl 113), p. 20.

The corantos also ran a number of reports on the activities of Polish military units, the so-called *Lisowczycy*, sent by Sigismund III as assistance for the Emperor in his war against Frederick V and his supporters. "The Cossaks," as the editors referred to them, were very often described as unruly "inconvenient guests" looting huge areas of the Habsburg lands, from Moravia and Silesia to Austria. "We are daily ruined here by the Polonians," wrote one of the correspondents from Brin in Austria in September 1623, and this tearful complaint was not unique, with similar ones published on a regular basis.<sup>19</sup> Their movements, news of further recruitments, and even rumours about their possible plans or routes were discussed and described in full detail in more than 30 reports. This should be not surprising as they were directly connected to the military situation in Germany. All these reports, although dealing mostly with military aspects, were also a clear illustration of not only the close military alliance but also the political accord between the Polish king and the Habsburgs.

The second largest grouping of news coming from or dealing with Poland-Lithuania covers political topics, including Poland-Lithuania's diplomatic relations with other states, her current domestic politics, and the functioning of the country's political system in general. Again, we can observe some strong disparity in reporting, since as was already mentioned, nearly half of the news items dealing with political issues concentrated on diplomacy.

The activities of Polish diplomats abroad, from The Hague, through Vienna, to Constantinople,<sup>20</sup> were generally covered more comprehensively than those of foreign ambassadors in Poland-Lithuania. However, in February 1625, *The continuation of our weekly news* did carry a report about an imperial ambassador's commission to negotiate in Warsaw for the recruitment of 60 thousand Cossacks who were planned to be sent to the Low Countries.<sup>21</sup> A similar report dealt with Tartar Chan's ambassador who was sent to Sigismund III with a mission to obtain the king's support against Turkey.<sup>22</sup>

All these reports were quite similar to those dealing with diplomatic relations between other countries, and focused on the diplomats' movements, the details of negotiations (if known or guessed), and ceremonial aspects, etc. The reports were rather superficial, although in the case of one mission, Krzysztof Zbaraski's

19 *Our last weekly newes*, 11 October 1623 (Dahl 131), pp. 13, 3; *The surprisall of two Imperial towns...*, 19 July 1622 (Dahl 61), pp. 3–4; *A coranto. Relating divers particulars...*, 7 November 1622 (Dahl 86), p. 8.

20 *Courant newes out of Italy...*, 15 July 1621 (Dahl 11), p. 2; *Corante, or, newes from Italy...*, 9 July 1621 (Dahl 22), p. 2; *The continuation of our weekly newes...*, 21 April 1625 (Dahl 169), p. 4; *The continuation of our weekly newes...*, 27 April 1625 (Dahl 170), p. 9.

21 *The continuation of our weekly newes*, 1 February 1625 (Dahl 162), p. 8.

22 *The continuation of our weekly newes*, 7 April 1725 (Dahl 167), p. 13.

embassy to Turkey, we deal with excellent, detailed coverage. The English readers learned that the Polish diplomat's arrival was impatiently expected in Constantinople, but also that he, surprisingly, had some problems with acquiring a passport, and that his secretary – who had arrived earlier to prepare his visit – was executed in revenge for a recent Cossack incursion into Turkish territory. When the ambassador finally reached the capital, his entry was described by two different reports; according to the one sent from Venice, he was accompanied by 500 horsemen and 1000 musketeers, while the other told of 800 "divers Noble and Gentlemen of his Countrey." His problematic relations with the Sultan's officials were also described, but finally the corantos were able to confirm his success and the ratification of the peace by the Turks.<sup>23</sup>

As far as Polish-Lithuanian domestic politics is concerned, it was usually covered in a surprisingly detailed way. One can easily recognize that it was represented as strongly polarized and turbulent, not only due to current events, but also the very specific character of the country's political system, which featured an elected monarch. In the 1620s, a series of reports dealing with the relationship between the king and his subjects indicated clearly that the gentry – who as a group enjoyed a special position – largely opposed the monarch's ambitions to recover his hereditary kingdom (Sweden) and his support for the Habsburgs, and that therefore Sigismund III was facing:

a great danger of tumults at home in Poland as being troubled with [a] factious populace, who in the Elective kingdom [is] still chalanging the power to call their Kings to account.<sup>24</sup>

Similarly, a few months later, one of the reports stated that there was no chance that the king could change his subjects' attitude, as:

Nor the Gentry and Noble men of Poland are so easily commanded, or obsequiously addicted to their Princes, as in absolute Monarchies, where either their tenures tye them to observation or their duties and loyalties compell them to allegiance.<sup>25</sup>

23 See for example, *Count Mansfields proceedings since the last battaile...*, 9 September 1622 (Dahl 74), p. 1; *Newes from most parts of Christendome*, 25 September 1622 (Dahl 77), pp. 1, 15; *Briefe abstracts out of divers letters of trust*, 28 November 1622 (Dahl 89), p. 3; *Weekly newes...*, 30 January 1623 (Dahl 96), p. 2; *The newes of this present weeke*, 12 May 1623 (Dahl 111), p. 5.

24 *The continuation of our former newes*, 24 April 1623 (Dahl 108), p. 12.

25 *The wonderfull resignation of Mustapha and the advancing of Amarath...*, 11 November 1623 (Dahl 133), p. 7.

When describing the way the Polish Parliament (Sejm) worked, the corantos presented a very similar picture – parliamentary sessions were often described as an arena of conflict between the king and his subjects, who opposed both his domestic and foreign policies. These reports are usually very detailed. Not only did they discuss the main issues debated by the members of both Houses, but on some occasions provided a very specific description of the events. In the spring of 1625 for example, readers learned that after another unsuccessful attempt to obtain the Sejm's consent for an official alliance with the Habsburgs, the king fell ill and at 11 o'clock at night finally left the session; the Parliament, due to his absence in the final hours, ended without making any binding decisions.<sup>26</sup>

A series of very interesting reports on Polish political life was also published in 1632 in relation to Sigismund's death.<sup>27</sup> The event did not seem to have been a surprise due to the king's advanced age and deteriorating health, and one coranto even introduced the news of his decease with the words:

those of Polonia have for so long disputed of the succession of their King, that at the last they have found a reason of resolving the succession by his death.<sup>28</sup>

Apart from describing the late king's last days in a very detailed and usually reliable way, all these accounts discussed the possible future turn of events during the imminent royal election. Almost all indicated that Prince Wladyslaw, Sigismund's oldest son, was most likely to prevail, although they also mention Gustavus Adolphus and Archduke Leopold as serious contenders. Within a few weeks, it was Wladyslaw who, according to the corantos, became practically the only candidate able to get enough supporters to win the election. This was not only due to his personal popularity but also his close relation with the Protestant faction, to whom he had supposedly promised to protect their freedom of confession.<sup>29</sup> This was only partly true, but when Wladyslaw was elected, it sealed to some extent the picture of a new Polish ruler who had been presented by the corantos of the 1620s as being in complete opposition to his staunchly Catholic father, and a person trying to smooth the religious tensions of the country. He was, for example, indicated as a mediator between some leaders of the Protestant opposition and his father

26 *The continuation of our weekly newes...*, 5 May 1625 (Dahl 171), p. 13.

27 *The continuation of our forraine avisoies*, 6 June 1632 (Dahl 274), p. 2.

28 *The continuation of our forraine avisoies*, 23 June 1632 (Dahl 277), p. 3.

29 *The continuation of our Swedish intelligence*, 1 September 1632 (Dahl 291), p. 7.

when they demanded that the Catholic Church should be stripped of some illegally obtained estates.<sup>30</sup>

The greatly detailed character of the reports dealing with Poland-Lithuania's political life and its unique institutions, like Sejm or royal election, might suggest that they attracted special attention in Europe and that the news networks did try to respond by providing comprehensive coverage of the way they operated. In England this political interest might also have been piqued by the complex relationship between James I and his Parliaments.

On the other hand, the religious situation in Poland-Lithuania, which could also have been of interest for English readers, was discussed by the corantos in a very different way; the number of news items on this subject is surprisingly scarce (only 6), and they were usually much less detailed. In the 1620s we find some reports on attempts of the Polish Protestant lords to strengthen their position, for example by demanding the expulsion of the Jesuits, who were – according to a report from 1622 – extremely unpopular in the country and who were also accused of preaching that the killing of a heretic, i.e. a Protestant, was not a sinful act.<sup>31</sup> There was also a story about St. Peter and St. Paul's Church – a Lutheran church in Danzig (Gdańsk) – mentioning that Sigismund was supposed to have transferred it to one of the Catholic orders, although in fact the church ended up in Calvinist hands.<sup>32</sup> This emphasizes the deep religious fractures and the government's attempts to preserve Catholic domination and to diminish further the influence of the Protestants.

As with religious matters, only a very limited number of reports included news on economic issues. These were mostly complaints about the difficult economic situation and the decline of commerce in some regions of the country, usually caused by the devastation of war.<sup>33</sup> In 1622 there was a slightly

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- 30 *Weekly newes from...*, 14 March 1623 (Dahl 103), p. 8. On one occasion, however, Wladyslaw was presented in a completely different light; during his European tour in 1624–1625, reports describing his visits to Brussels, Vienna, and Rome were clearly emphasizing the close links of the Polish Vasas to the Habsburgs and the Papacy. Moreover, the prince was even a victim of some false accusations when a story of his visit to the Spanish camp at Breda and a failed military adventure during which he allegedly lost more than 3000 Spanish soldiers, was run by one of the corantos. This could have been an attempt to use the Polish prince's presence at Breda for propaganda reasons. *The continuation of of[sic] the weekly newes...*, 22 September 1624 (Dahl 150), pp. 11–12.
- 31 *A tr[ue] relati[on] of the pro[cee]dings of the Bavarian and Spa[nish] forces*, 11 July 1622 (Dahl 57), pp. 5, 11; *The surprisall of two Imperial towns...*, 19 July 1622 (Dahl 61), p. 7.
- 32 *A relation of this weekly newes*, 22 October 1622 (Dahl 82), p. 10.
- 33 *More newes of the affairs of the world*, 10 June 1623 (Dahl 115), p. 5; *The continuation of our weekly newes...*, 29 August 1626 (omitted by Dahl), pp. 2, 7.

more optimistic piece of news, when it was indicated that merchants from Lviv (Lwów) made huge profits by selling a substantial amount of grain to Constantinople.<sup>34</sup> In some other cases information that could actually be of great importance, for instance to readers interested in Baltic trade, could be found in reports describing military operations, parliamentary sessions, etc. For example, in 1627 readers learned that Gustavus Adolphus, who had entered the city of Elbing (Elbląg),<sup>35</sup> planned to improve the conditions of the local port by redirecting the Vistula River so it could become a major commercial centre.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, in late 1624, reports on plans to call a Parliament suggested that one of the problems to be discussed during its session would be the depreciation of the Polish currency.<sup>37</sup>

Even less attention was paid by the corantos to providing their readers with Polish news on natural disasters, famines, etc. An example of this kind of news was printed only once, in the summer of 1622, and it dealt with the tragic fire that had destroyed the Cathedral in Poznań.<sup>38</sup> In some other cases, famine, for example, was given as an explanation for some other events – in 1624 starving Tartars were supposed to be moving towards Poland-Lithuania as they were not able to feed themselves and their families in their country.<sup>39</sup> This absence may be considered to be quite surprising, as these kind of topics were usually popular in the early modern press, but on the other hand, corantos in general very seldom ran such stories.<sup>40</sup>

What factors determined that the structure of news dealing with or coming from Poland-Lithuania looked this way? One of the most important was undoubtedly the place of origin of reports used by the editors. The map (Map 2.1), shows all the cities where more than 3 reports were datelined from, and selected cities where 1 or 2 reports originated. It shows that the highest numbers of reports were provided by the major European news hubs, such as Vienna, Prague, and Venice. Among the cities that were named as a place of origin of a dozen or more reports, one can also find Breslau (Wrocław) and Danzig – centres of relatively secondary importance for the pan-European

34 *A tr[ue] relat[ion] of the pro[cee]dings of the Bavarian and Spa[nish] forces*, 11 July 1622 (Dahl 57), p. 6.

35 *The continuation of our weekly newes...*, 29 August 1626 (omitted by Dahl), pp. 2, 4.

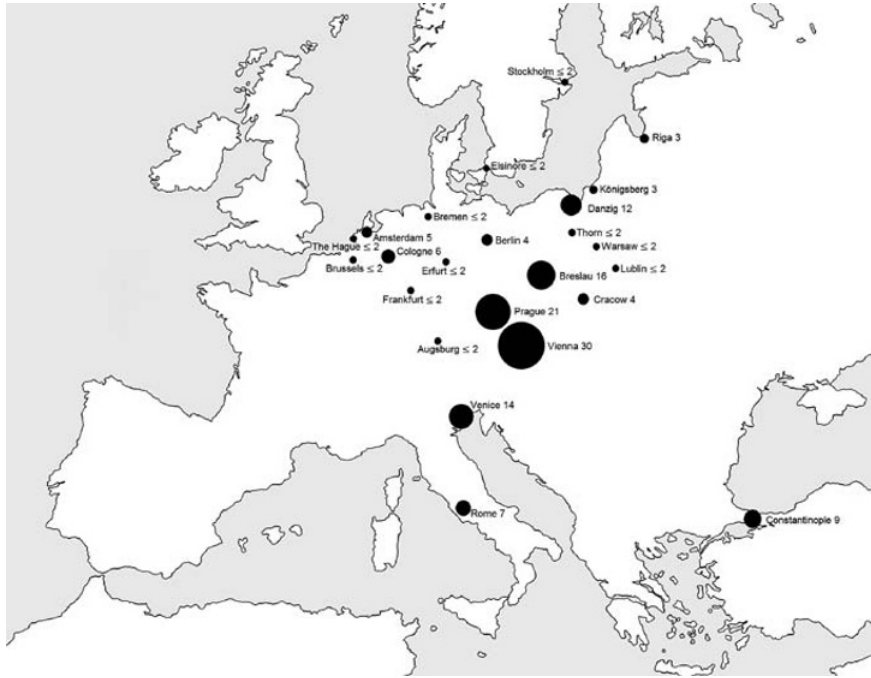
36 *The continuation of our weekly newes...*, 10 July 1627 (omitted by Dahl), sig. A2.

37 *The two wonderful and lamentable accidents...*, 11 October 1624 (Dahl 392), p. 2.

38 *A relation of many memorable...*, 14 September 1622 (Dahl 75), p. 9.

39 *The continuation of the weekly newes...*, 16 September 1624 (Dahl 149), pp. 4–5.

40 Maria Bogucka, "The Destruction of Towns by Natural Disaster as Reported in Early Modern Newspapers" in M. Bogucka (ed.), *Baltic Commerce and Urban Society 1500–1700: Gdansk/Danzig and Its Polish Context* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p. 311.



MAP 2.1 *Distribution of datelines*

information network but, in the case of Breslau, crucial for channeling news from territories east of the Habsburg borders, and Danzig, crucial as the main news centre of the whole Baltic region. Among the cities that provided between 3 and 12 reports, one can identify both large news hubs like Amsterdam and Rome, and lesser cities like Berlin and Riga. There were also 9 reports sent directly from Constantinople, although some of the information on Turkish-Polish relations was channeled through Venice as well. The list of cities that provided only a diminutive number of reports includes Elsinore and Stockholm in Scandinavia, but also, among others, Frankfurt and Bremen in Germany, and The Hague in the Netherlands.

As far as the 28 reports coming directly from Poland-Lithuania are concerned, we see, unsurprisingly, the importance of Danzig (12 reports, which is more than 40% of the total number). Cracow, and generally “Poland,” were identified as the origin of 4 reports each, while only 2 reports were sent from the capital – Warsaw. No reports originated in Lithuania (although the country was mentioned in 1622 when one of the reports was datelined as coming from “Riga in Lithuania,” although this was an error as Riga was then a part of Livonia and, by 1622 was already under Swedish control).

As we can see, the ratio of reports from the 3 Habsburgs cities (Vienna, Prague, and Breslau) to those originating directly from Polish-Lithuanian territory is nearly 2.5 to 1, which clearly indicates that it was the Habsburg Empire's news network that played a critical role in providing English editors with news both from, and dealing with, Poland-Lithuania. This can explain the large number of news items dealing with the activities of Polish military units in the Empire, coverage of the actions of Polish diplomats in Vienna, Sigismund III's military plans, and reports on Bethlen Gabor, whose relationship with Poland was relatively important for the Emperor.

The prominent position of Venice can be explained by its role as the major news hub channeling reports from the Levant, while Constantinople owed its place to the fact that the editors had direct access to materials provided by the English ambassador in Constantinople, Sir Thomas Roe, who was personally involved in Polish-Turkish negotiations and was a strong supporter of England's possible cooperation with Bethlen Gabor.<sup>41</sup> One must also remember, that as far as Italian news (both from Venice and Rome) is concerned, there was a traditional postal route between these cities and Antwerp, which was one of the most important news hubs providing coranto editors with continental news.<sup>42</sup> This, combined with the fact that the best surviving run of corantos comes from the early 1620s, when Poland-Lithuania and Turkey were involved in a war, helps clarify why we deal with such a significant number of reports about military conflicts between these two countries.

What is surprising is how relatively few reports referring to events in Poland-Lithuania came from the Baltic cities and, consequently, how little the

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41 Paul Arblaster, "Posts, Newsletters, Newspapers: England in a European system of Communications" in J. Raymond (ed.), *News Networks in Seventeenth-Century Britain and Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 24. In July 1622, Roe was named as a source of news reports in *A true relation of the murder of Osman the great Turke*, 4 July 1622 (Dahl 56), p. 4, but there are also some other indications for his cooperation with the editors. For example, in one of the corantos describing the Polish-Turkish conflict and later the peace negotiations, it was stated that the information the publication included came from "a Latin copie written by a gentleman of quality, who was an actor in all the businesse", *Newes from Turkie and Poland...*, s.d. (Dahl 35), p. 1. As Roe was, in this period, directly involved in Polish-Turkish negotiations, he seems the most likely person to be this gentleman, see, Anna Kalinowska, "Rzeczpospolita w działalności ambasadora angielskiego w Konstantynopolu sir Thomas a Roe, 1621–1628" in R. Skowron (ed.), *Polska wobec wielkich konfliktów w Europie nowożytnej. Z dziejów dyplomacji i stosunków międzynarodowych* (Kraków: Societas Vistulana 2009), p. 310.

42 Wolfgang Behringer, "Communications Revolutions: A Historiographical Concept", *German History*, 24 (2006), p. 350; Boys, *London's News Press*, p. 42.



corantos reported on the Baltic trade and economic situation in East-Central Europe, even though it was so important for England. This seems to have resulted from the fact that the Eastland merchants might have been able to use their own specialized news networks that provided them with information critical for conducting their business, but for some reason were not interested in sharing it with a wider audience. There is limited evidence to support this theory as only scarce sources documenting their work were preserved. However, there is no doubt that because of the scale of commercial activities and the complicated situation in the region, they must have wanted access to the latest news as it was crucial to their operations.

When it comes to the number of reports received directly from Poland-Lithuania, which amounts to 15% of all identified, one should not be surprised by what seems to be a rather low number. The situation where only a relatively small number of reports dealing with a specific country were in fact coming from that place was quite typical for the period. Even in the case of English news published in Antwerp in the 1620s, only about 40% of reports came from England, in spite of the relatively small distance and the existence of regular postal services.<sup>43</sup>

As far as the speed with which Polish news was transferred to England is concerned, it seems that the average time required to pass it along was between 4 and 7 weeks, but of course the origins of a given report, weather conditions, and sometimes its contents as well, were crucial factors here. Unsurprisingly, if the report was sent from Constantinople – either directly or via Venice – it was usually at least 6 to 7 weeks (and sometimes much longer) before it was published, while news of the visit of a Polish prince to the Netherlands could have been presented to readers within 10 days.<sup>44</sup> In the case of reports coming directly from Poland-Lithuania, it appears that whether they were coming from news hubs like Danzig or from other cities, it could take a similar time for them to reach London. Two reports on Sigismund III's death are a good illustration of this. The first is datelined from Warsaw on 29 April 1632 New Style and reports that the king died the same day, and the other is datelined from Danzig on 4 May (no information was given whether it was Old or New Style date, but it must have been dated according to the Julian calendar). They were published

43 Arblaster, "Posts, Newsletters, Newspapers", p. 25.

44 For example a report on Wladyslaw's visit to Breda, datelined from Middleburg on 5 October 1624, was printed on page 11 of *The continuation of of [sic] the weekly newes...* (Dahl 150), issued also on 5 October. This means that it must have been dated according to the New Style and that it took exactly 10 days between it being written and being printed.

on the 6th and the 23rd of June respectively, which means that each of them took about 50 days to reach London and be published.<sup>45</sup> However, sometimes a report could arrive in London just after the publication of the most recent coranto and therefore would not be printed before the next number was issued, which, depending on situation, could have taken place within a few days, a week, almost two weeks, or even longer.

One must also remember that it was pretty typical for the corantos not to inform readers whether the reports were dated according to the Old or New Style, which, of course, illuminates another difficulty for researchers.<sup>46</sup> Even though the New Style was already in use in Poland-Lithuania (since 1582) it was not uncommon for foreigners, as well as citizens of Prussian Cities, to use sometimes either dual or Old Style dating. This was also the case for reports from other Catholic countries that had accepted the Gregorian calendar, sometimes even from Rome itself, as they could have been dated according to the Old Style.<sup>47</sup> As a result we are often left guessing at what the actual date of the report could be.

Similarly, one can only guess when it comes to a detailed identification of sources of information. Just as in the case of news from other countries, news dealing with Poland-Lithuania must have come from all kinds of continental materials (printed publications, newsletters, correspondence, etc.) traditionally used as sources by the London publishers. This is confirmed by phrases like "letters from Vienna," "they write from Prague," "we hear from Danzik," or "Wee have tidings out of Polonia," used to introduce news items from the Continent. Situations where it was clearly indicated what kind of source materials had been used for a report were rather rare, but did happen nonetheless. In early 1623, *The newes of forraine partes*...quoted letters from Hungary as the basis for a report received from Vienna dealing with Bethlen Gabor's planned marriage to a "Polonian Princesse of Iarislaw."<sup>48</sup> Just a few weeks later the readers of

45 *The continuation of our forraine avises*, 6 June 1632 (Dahl 274), p. 4; *The continuation of our forraine avises*, 23 June 1632 (Dahl 277), p. 3.

46 Boys, *London's News Press*, p. 47.

47 This can be illustrated by another report on the Polish prince's European journey. The Polish sources confirm that he arrived in Modena on 5 December 1624, while the report from Rome recording his visit to this city, gave the date of 25 November, which clearly indicates that it was dated according to the Old Style. *The continuation of the weekly newes*..., 5 January 1625 (Dahl 160), p. 2. See also A. Przyboś (ed.), *Podróż królewicza Władysława Wazy do krajów Europy Zachodniej w latach 1624–1625* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1977), p. 226.

48 *The newes of forraine partes*, 28 February 1623 (Dahl 100), pp. 10–11. On Bethlen Gabor's planned marriage see also *A relation of the late horrible treason*..., 19 February 1623 (Dahl 99), p. 29.

another coranto were informed that a report from Prague discussing the current political situation and Sigismund's diplomatic plans, was based on "the Polonian poast" that had recently passed "by their Citie to go towards Regensburg, to present the Emperour with these tidings."<sup>49</sup>

Apart from Sir Thomas Roe, who supplied editors with Turkish news, no particular person was named as their informant. Just once was it made clear that a piece of news – that the Polish king was keen on recruiting some English and Irish soldiers – was sent to England via Lübeck and Hamburg by merchants living in Cracow and Sandomierz, who we can assume were either English or Scots, as people of both nations lived in these two cities. Neither this fact, nor the character of their activities in Poland, were, however, clarified in the report.<sup>50</sup> The detailed character of reports on the Polish-Swedish war between 1625 and 1628, suggests that at least some of them could have come from Swedish soldiers (again probably English and Scottish officers fighting under Gustavus Adolphus),<sup>51</sup> but those could also have been provided by other channels.

We do not know who provided the editors with the description of Sigismund III's death, datelined from Warsaw. Its contents would suggest that this was a person close to the court who acted as an editor's correspondent, but it is still unclear, especially as there had been no previous direct regular influx of news from the Polish capital. Likewise, information about the Polish Protestants' support of Gustavus Adolphus's candidacy for the Polish throne in 1632 could imply that the news had originated from their circles – they did try to use it to strengthen their position before the election – but this cannot be confirmed.

But what does it all mean in more general terms? There is no doubt that the corantos played an important role in shaping the way Poland-Lithuania was perceived in England in the early seventeenth century, as they were a popular source of information for the English public. The picture they presented can be described as comprehensive, albeit not free from some stereotypical opinions, e.g. about the role of the Catholic Church and the Jesuits, who were often believed to act in a malignant way in order to suppress Protestantism. This stereotyping tendency, however, was typical for the early modern press in

49 *The continuation of our former newes*, 24 April 1623 (Dahl 108), p. 11.

50 *The wonderfull resignation of Mustapha and the advancing of Amarith...*, 11 November 1623 (Dahl 133), p. 6. This is the only case when the route of the report from Poland could be followed in such a detailed way.

51 Dauvit Horsbroch, "Wish you were here? Scottish Reactions to 'Postcards' Home from the Germane Warres" in S. Murdoch (ed.), *Scotland and the Thirty Years' War, 1618–1648* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2001), pp. 246–247, p. 250.

general. We also must not forget, that coranto editors showed strong pro-Protestant sympathies.<sup>52</sup>

There was also a pretty clearly visible evolution of the way the news from or dealing with Poland-Lithuania was presented to the English reading audience. Although initially it was more focused on simply covering the events, from the mid-1620s onwards the context in which the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was reported on became much more complex.

The reports on Poland's relations with her neighbours – including Sweden, Turkey, and Transylvania – and also her domestic politics, show that these relations and politics were now all believed to be factors that could potentially affect Gustavus Adolphus's and/or Bethlen Gabor's ability to support the Protestant cause, and the Habsburgs' ability to harm their opponents. In other words, they could potentially have a significant impact, not only locally, but also on a much wider international level. As the developments of the Thirty Years' War were extremely important for English readers, this could have triggered additional interest in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This remained unchanged until 1632, and again, when the publication of corantos was resumed in the late 1630s, the few Polish reports that were printed between 1638 and 1641 were of a very similar nature. Additionally, the domestic situation in England in 1620s could have been crucial for the editors' decisions to provide their readers with more detailed information on the political life of another country where relations between the monarch and his subjects were far from amicable due to the king's position on foreign policy and religious issues. This evolution might also have been a result of the changes corantos had been undergoing as a genre during the early 1620s, but it does not seem to be the decisive factor in this particular case.

The presence of Polish news in the corantos proves that by the 1620s, in spite of all possible impediments, Poland-Lithuania was already a part of the larger pan-European system, consisting of interfacing networks making it possible to transmit news on a pretty regular basis from one part of the Continent to another. In the particular case of the English press, these were either private networks – such as Sir Thomas Roe's reports and the news that was probably sent by military men active in Prussia – or more established and institutionalized ones. We cannot name precisely all of the kinds of materials originating in Danzig that were used by the editors, but we can guess that these might have included press publications, as the city had developed its own press market.<sup>53</sup> However, when

52 Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, p. 136.

53 Jan Lankau, *Prasa Staropolska na tle rozwoju prasy w Europie 1513–1729* (Kraków: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1960), pp. 92–94.

we look at the reports datelined from Danzig that touch on Polish political life, for example discussing recent incidents during the Sejm's sessions, it is apparent that they are based on the accounts prepared for the City Council and circulated widely among the public.<sup>54</sup>

One must not forget that sometimes it is a combination of factors that needs to be taken under consideration. The large numbers of reports datelined from Vienna, Prague, and Silesia, and the 'internationalization' of Polish news contexts, could have resulted both from the fact that the situation in the Habsburg dominions was of interest to English readers, and from the fact that the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was geographically close and linked to the same news networks, including the well-established *Reichpost* system that provided London editors with news on the latest development in the Thirty Years, War.<sup>55</sup> These influences are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

These links were not strong enough to secure a more regular direct inflow of information from the Polish-Lithuanian state to London in the 1620s and 1630s, but they could have added to the interest in this country that can be observed in England in this period. It was more than a decade and took some further significant changes in the functioning of news networks in East-Central Europe, before an English audience was able to read the first direct regular weekly reports covering a wide spectrum of events in Poland-Lithuania. This, however, would have been far less likely to have come to pass, had there been no "tidings out of Polonia" printed in London corantos prior to this.

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54 Jan Pirożyński, "Die Stellung der polnischen Metropolen im europäischen Nachrichtenverkehr des 16. Jahrhunderts" in Andrea Langer and Georg Michels (eds.), *Metropolen Und Kulturtransfer Im 15./16. Jahrhundert.: Prag – Krakau – Danzig – Wien* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2001), p. 105; Kazimierz Maliszewski, "Gdańsk jako ośrodek transferu informacji i komunikacji społecznej w Rzeczypospolitej szlacheckiej w XVII–XVIII wieku" in S. Salomonowicz (ed.), *Mieszczanństwo Gdańskie* (Gdańsk: Gdańskie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 1997), pp. 228–229.

55 Behringer, "Communications Revolutions", pp. 345, 352–353; Boys, *London's News Press*, pp. 38, 40.

## Transylvania in German Newspapers

*Systems of Reporting and the News Stories of György II Rákóczi,  
1657–1658*

*Virginia Dillon*

Following the end of the Thirty Years' War, the continent of Europe did not fall into a settled peace, and one of the largest and longest-lasting conflicts was the series of military and political struggles now known as the Northern Wars. The rotating cast included Sweden, Denmark, the Cossacks, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Russia, Prussia, and, for one year, György II Rákóczi, Prince of Transylvania. Though Rákóczi entered the war in January 1657 with the dream of a Transylvanian wearing the crown of Poland, by December he was fleeing from the Tartars to a diet that awaited his resignation. The year 1658 only saw further decline for Transylvania, as Ottoman forces marched through the principality, reasserting their control.

The stories of Transylvania during this two-year period offer an interesting example of many of the topics that appear in seventeenth-century news. A country which invades its neighbour is then subject to an invasion itself; a prince claims authority in a foreign land and then has his own power taken from him in his home country; Calvinists fight Catholics, then Tartars and Turks; and all the while Transylvania is rarely the author of its own news, but rather the subject of reporting by regions which are often less than friendly. This dynamic affects both how news is covered, and even what news is considered worthy of attention.

The news of Transylvania came not only via the nearest news centre in Vienna with ties to Hungary, but also through the Polish-Prussian system in the north, with each system concentrating on those events which most affected the reporting region, rather than demonstrating any more general interest in Transylvania. As a result, the two waves of events – the invasion of Poland by Rákóczi in 1657 and the invasion of Transylvania by the Ottomans in 1658 – are told from different perspectives. This paper will first explore these two reporting systems, defining which cities report news of Transylvania, and further, which locations are cited as a source of the information conveyed. Afterwards, the subjects of politics, religion, and violence will be examined, and distinctions drawn about the selection of events covered and patterns in language usage for each reporting location. From the Prussia-Poland system comes news of Rákóczi's march, littered with words describing acts of violence, prayers to

God for protection, and accompanied by promises to preserve the rights of the population. From the Vienna-Hungary system comes news of the struggle for authority within the principality, conveyed with fewer words of violence, but more references to the participants' religious affiliation and the need to preserve Christendom. The reporting location of news of Transylvania determines not only what political news is related, but also how religion is incorporated into the story, and how frequently violent words are employed.

### Systems of Reporting

The principality of Transylvania and its leaders are the subjects of 577 different news reports during the years 1657–1658, but only rarely do these reports come from the region itself. Rather, news of Transylvania is reported chiefly by two different reporting systems. These systems are defined here by the locations cited both in the reports' datelines and any references made to a source of news within the text. (Map 3.1).<sup>1</sup>

The most frequent reporting location is the city of Vienna, which offers 178 news reports, or 31% of the total number of reports.<sup>2</sup> While no other single city generates anywhere near that number, if neighbouring cities are considered together as a reporting region rather than individually, the numbers of reports in each grouping are more equal (see Table 3.1). With this reorganization, the cities of Polish Prussia – including Elbing (50), Thorn (48), Marienburg (33), and Danzig (23) – rival the contribution of Vienna. Furthermore, the reports from the Habsburg Hereditary Lands outside of Vienna – including Silesia (31), Prague (27), and Breslau (23) – have a much more significant presence.<sup>3</sup> The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the German lands, and the allied Swedish and Brandenburg Baltic territories (including Königsberg (17)), are roughly comparable, while the combined region of Hungary and Transylvania is nearly equal to that of the cities linked by the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>4</sup>

1 This is not to deny the systems' infrastructural basis, but rather to note that this aspect will not be a subject of this paper. For more on the postal system, which is of obvious importance to the communication of news, see Wolfgang Behringer, *Im Zeichen des Merkur: Reichspost und Kommunikationsrevolution in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Göttingen: Vanerhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003).

2 A full list of the extant newspapers in the German language, their publication information, and the surviving issues from 1657–1658 is given at the end of the chapter (see p. 75).

3 In order to preserve continuity with the German-language newspapers, the names of all cities are given in German.

4 For the purposes of brevity and clarity, this paper will concentrate on the news from the major reporting centers of Vienna, Prussia, and the Hereditary Lands, as well as those



MAP 3.1 *Map indicating with a star the location of German-language newspapers with extant issues from 1657–1658, and indicating with a circle the reporting locations for the news of Transylvania (size of circle demonstrates number of reports)*

These reports generally break down into three story subjects: those which relate to Rákóczi's invasion of Poland and its consequences; those which focus on the conflicts and negotiations between the Transylvanian princes and the Ottoman Porte; and the reactions within Hungary to these events.<sup>5</sup> By looking at reporting region and story subject, several patterns are immediately apparent. The neighbouring regions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Prussia (both Polish and Brandenburg-Swedish), and the Hereditary Lands, are more likely to report on Rákóczi's involvement in Poland. The Ottomans, however, are more frequently the subject of news reports from Vienna, the Mediterranean, and the reporting region of Hungary-Transylvania.

From these reporting locations, references within the news text itself can give a more subtle understanding of how news of Transylvania is circulated.

locations giving reports of local occurrences, Hungary and Transylvania, and Poland-Lithuania.

5 Because each report can contain news on more than one subject, on a few occasions reports contain more than one type of story. Thus, there are more stories than reports.



TABLE 3.1 *Number of reports originating in each region, subdivided by story subject*

Reporting region	Reports	Story subject		
	Total	Poland	Ottomans	Hungary
Vienna	178	45	113	32
Polish Prussia	157	150	4	2
Hereditary Lands	91	65	21	5
Poland-Lithuania	45	45	2	0
German Lands	41	17	22	3
Brandenburg-Swedish Prussia	33	24	6	2
Mediterranean	14	1	11	2
Hungary & Transylvania	12	1	11	0
Other*	6	3	3	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>577</i>	<i>351</i>	<i>193</i>	<i>46</i>

\* The category 'Other' includes 3 reports whose reporting location is unknown, 2 reports from The Hague and 1 from Alsace.

These in-text references to the source of the news may only be an allusion to a report received or rumour heard, but occasionally news is cited as coming from a specific location, brought by an official messenger or envoy, through travellers and merchants, or via manuscript letters. By adding these details to our reporting locations, a more nuanced web of news sharing emerges.

The first major reporting system is centred on the city of Vienna. During this period, the reports from Vienna frequently note that information on Transylvania comes from either Hungary (45), a land under the Imperial crown, or Transylvania itself (23). Additionally, there are occasional reports from the other regions participating in the conflicts: Poland (5) and the Ottoman Empire (6). The references made to news from Hungary rarely designate a specific medium through which the news is transmitted, simply noting that a report comes from Hungary, while news from the other regions often travels via a designated messenger or envoy, such as a Polish emissary or a Turkish *chiaus*.<sup>6</sup>

6 "Aus Ungarn kompt Bericht," "Aus Wien/vom 26. Junii." *HPZ:Sa*, Hamburg 1658, no. 28; "Wien vom 2.12. Dito" [April] *WZ:Do*, Hamburg 1657, no. 17; "Auß Wien/vom 25. April" *OWP*, Frankfurt 1657, no. 19.

The second major reporting system is based around the reporting centres of the Baltic, and Polish and Brandenburg-Swedish Prussia. A large number of reports from Polish Prussia originate in the cities and villages of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (20), as well as occasional reports from representatives of the King of Sweden (5) and the Prince of Transylvania (4) as they march through the country. This news is brought by a variety of individuals, primarily connected to the military, including both Swedish officers and Polish cavalry captains.<sup>7</sup> News also frequently circulates within the region itself (16), with Thorn in particular being a source commonly cited in-text (12). Similarly, the reports from Brandenburg-Swedish Prussia also cite news as coming primarily from the region of conflict, particularly via military sources. News is attributed to communications from Poland-Lithuania (3), the Scandinavian armies (3), Transylvania (1), and Hungary (1), as well as Polish Prussia (2), the Hereditary Lands (2), and Vienna (1).

These two reporting systems are not discrete entities and the reporting region of the Hereditary Lands offers a point of intersection. This region includes the lands of Silesia, Bohemia, and Moravia, all of which were ruled by the Habsburg emperor under the title King of Bohemia. However, the region of Silesia in particular also had strong economic and cultural ties with its neighbor, Poland-Lithuania. Consequently, the reports from this region contain a large number of references to news from Poland-Lithuania (17), as well as some references to sources from Vienna (4), the German Lands (3), and the armies of Sweden and Denmark (3), among others. This news is brought by civilian travellers and merchants in addition to the military personnel: "some merchants from Russe and Zamość," "a good friend from Tarnowitz," "a colonel coming from Poland," "several Scots and passengers from Lemberg," and "an engineer from the Royal Hungarian camps."<sup>8</sup>

News of Transylvania rarely comes from the principality itself, rather information travels from outside sources via two reporting systems. The first is news printed in newspapers directly from Vienna, commonly citing Hungary or

7 "Thorn vom 7. Dito" [April] *WZ:Do*, Hamburg 1657, no. 15; "Elbingen vom 4. 14. Dito" [August] *WZ:Do*, Hamburg 1658, no. 34.

8 In the original: "einige Kauffleute aus Reussen und Samoisce," "Extract Schreibens aus Bresßlaw vom 17. Dito" *WZ:Di*, Hamburg 1657, no. 10; "ein guter Freund von Tornawitz 12. Meil von Crakow liegend," "Bresßlaw vom 7. April" *WZ:Di*, Hamburg 1657, no. 16; "auß Polen kommender Obrister," "Aus Praag/vom 23. Junii." *HPZ:Sa*, Hamburg 1657, no. 27; "etliche Schotten und Passagieri/so von Lemberg," "Auß Schlesien/vom 1. 11. Augstmonat." *NZR*, Zurich 1657, no. 34; "ein Ingeneur aus dem Königl. Hungarischen Läger," "Bresßlaw vom 8. 18. Dito." [August] *WZ:Di*, Hamburg 1657, no. 35.

envoys as the source of information. The second is a broader spreading of news from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, either directly to the newspapers, or through Prussia and the Hereditary Lands. Polish Prussia, in particular, then circulates news within the region, with the cities of Thorn, Danzig, and Marienburg acting as both reporters of news and as sources cited within the news reports.<sup>9</sup> Each reporting system, Vienna-Hungary and Prussia-Poland, report the news of Transylvania that is of greatest interest to their own regional concerns. From Prussia-Poland comes, almost exclusively, news of the Rákóczi's Polish invasion. From Vienna-Hungary comes a greater concentration of news reports concerning the Ottoman advance and the domestic issues of Hungary.

### Political News

Over the course of only two years Rákóczi falls from being a prince with aspirations to the throne of Poland, to having his own title revoked by his diet and two different men elected in his place. While the story can now be told as a cohesive narrative, in the newspapers of the time each turn of events was related from a different perspective. Poland, Prussia, and the Hereditary Lands related occurrences within Poland; while Vienna, Hungary, and Transylvania concentrated on political events within the principality itself, particularly as they related to the Ottomans. The concerns of each reporting region, rather than any overarching interest in the affairs of the principality, dictate what is communicated about Transylvania and printed in the newspapers.

The story of the Polish invasion that led to Rákóczi's eventual political downfall begins with the signing of the Treaty of Radnot with King Charles X Gustav of Sweden on 6 December 1656. With this alliance, Rákóczi promised Sweden military support, and Sweden offered Rákóczi the crown of Poland-Lithuania, as long as the current king of Poland, John II Casimir Vasa, did not successfully return from his exile in the duchy of Opole-Racibórz in Upper Silesia to reclaim it. Soon after, Rákóczi also formed an alliance with the Zaporozhian Cossacks who had been rebelling against Casimir since 1648.<sup>10</sup> Both of these events were recounted in reports from nearly every reporting region, with particular attention paid by the cities of Brandenburg and Swedish

9 Thorn is cited 14 times in other news stories from within Polish Prussia, Danzig is cited 5 times, and Marienburg, twice.

10 For more see Robert Frost, *The Northern Wars: War, State and Society in Northeastern Europe, 1558–1721* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), pp. 156–191.

Prussia, as well as a detailed account of the terms of the Treaty of Radnot from the city of Thorn.<sup>11</sup>

Once the Transylvanian army crossed into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, news from Poland became of central importance. News of the entrance of Rákóczi into the cities of Lemberg, Krakow, and Brest came from the cities themselves or those nearby, and recounted the promise that the prince came “as a friend, and not as an enemy” and would protect noble rights.<sup>12</sup> Reports from Polish Prussia also contain promises from Rákóczi that his reign as king would be as blessed as that of István Báthory.<sup>13</sup>

Though Rákóczi’s march was initially successful, his luck changed in the summer of 1657 when Charles turned the Swedish troops north to confront the Danish army which had recently declared an alliance with Casimir. Rákóczi, left without his strongest ally and facing a population which did not support his claim to the throne, signed a humbling peace treaty and returned to Transylvania. This disappointing outcome of Rákóczi’s attempt to claim the crown of Poland received attention, not only from the cities of Prussia and Poland-Lithuania, but also from the Hereditary Lands, albeit in less detailed reports.<sup>14</sup> After the peace is signed and Rákóczi returns to Transylvania, the cities of Poland and Prussia largely stop reporting on political events in

11 “Thorn vom 14. Martii. 1657.” *EZ:PS*, Stettin 1657, no. 12.

12 One report states that a trumpeter from Rákóczi to Lemberg announced “Er kähme als ein Freund/und nicht als ein Feind,” *Extract Schreibens auß Samoiscie den 25. Jan. 1657.* *EZ:App*, Stettin 1657, no. 7. There are also reports from Krakow and Brest: “Crakow vom 5. April.” *WZ:Do*, Hamburg 1657, no. 17; “Kurtzer Bericht Welcher gestalt der feste Orth Brescie Litewsky von Ihrer Königl. Majest. zu Schweden/rc. rc. und dem Fürsten von Siebenbürgen per Accord ohne Verlust eines einzigen Manns erobert worden/sampt denen daselbst getroffenen Accords-Puncten. [...] Gegeben im Königl. Hauptquartier Ostrozana den 14. 24. Maii 1657. Folgen die Accords Puncta. [...] Gegeben im Feldlager bey Brzescie den 6. 16. Maii. 1657.” *WZ:Do*, Hamburg 1657, no. 23.

13 Báthory was a Transylvanian prince who was king of Poland in the sixteenth century. “Elbingen vom 6. 16. Febr.” *WZ:Do*, Hamburg 1657, no. 8; “Copia eines vertrauten Schreibens aus Dantzic an einen Churfürstl. Brandenburgischen Bedienten *sub dato* 6. Januarii.” *WZ:App*, Hamburg 1657, no. 3; “Elbingen vom 2. Dito.” [March] *WZ:App*, Hamburg 1657, no. 10.

14 Such as “Auß Schlösien vom 15. 25. Augstm.” *NZR*, Zurich 1657, no. 36; “Aliud ab eodem” [Breslau, 17 February] *WZ:Do*, Hamburg 1657, no. 9; “Breßlaw vom 9. Dito” *WZ:Do*, Hamburg 1657, no. 13. The conditions of the peace are enumerated in “Aus Pilza/vom 12. Julij.” *ZAH*, Copenhagen 1657, no. 29. Other reports include “*Marienburg* vom 11. 21. Augusti 1657.” *EZ:PS*, Stettin 1657, no. 33. “Dantzic vom 11. Augusti.” *ZAH*, Copenhagen 1657, no. 33.

Transylvania.<sup>15</sup> Their interest was primarily regional, and once the prince marches out of their country he is no longer a great concern, even with the political upheaval that is about to take place across the border.

The next wave of events is largely reported from Hungary, Vienna, and Transylvania, and had actually begun while Rákóczi was still in Poland. The prince's march into a foreign country had upset the Ottoman Porte, to which Transylvania had owed suzerainty since the sixteenth century. Though the principality had been largely autonomous in internal matters, Rákóczi's military action had not been approved by the sultan, and the Ottomans now wanted the prince dismissed from his position. The Porte sent the Crimean Tartars into Poland to intercept Rákóczi's army, and the prince's attempts to avoid confronting them were unsuccessful. When the Transylvanians and the Tartars met, Rákóczi abandoned his troops and quickly fled to Transylvania.

When Rákóczi returned, he found the diet in Weißenburg (present day Alba Iulia, Romania; Gyulafehérvár in Hungarian) had received orders from the Ottoman Grand Vizier Mehmed Köprülü to immediately revoke his title of Prince of Transylvania and to elect Ferenc Rhédey in his stead. Though Rákóczi initially accepted his dismissal, he soon changed his mind and attempted to retake his position. In response, the Ottomans sent troops into the principality to reassert their authority. In the autumn of 1658, Ákos Barcsai approached Köprülü with promises of loyalty, and, in return, became the third prince of Transylvania in a year, a position confirmed by the diet in October. The most detailed descriptions of these events came in reports from Hungary and Transylvania, but the meetings of the diets were also of particular importance to Vienna.<sup>16</sup> The Holy Roman and Ottoman Empires had fought a series of wars in the sixteenth century, and, with the Ottoman army once again marching near the Hungarian borders, Vienna is inspired to pay increased attention to Transylvanian political affairs.<sup>17</sup> Transylvania is in a precarious position,

15 There are a few reports from Poland and Prussia on the story subjects of the Ottomans and Hungary (see Table. 3.2), but these are only a small fraction of the number that had appeared when Rákóczi was marching in Poland-Lithuania.

16 "Aus Newhäusel vom 21. Novemb." *WZ:Di*, Hamburg 1657, no. 53; "Aus Siebenbürgen vom 27. Decemb." *WZ:Do*, Hamburg 1658, no. 4; "Siebenbürgen vom 27. Dito." [September] *WZ:App*, Hamburg 1658, no. 44.

17 There are numerous reports from Vienna which include of news of the political situation in Transylvania, some in detail, some only briefly. A sampling of these stories which concentrate on the proceedings of the Transylvanian Estates and the Hungarian Diet include: "Wien vom 19. Dito." [Dec.] *WZ:Do*, Hamburg 1658, no. 1; "Aliud ab eodem" [Vienna, 12. December] *WZ:Do*, Hamburg 1657, no. 52; "Wien vom 28. Dito." [November] *WZ:Do*, Hamburg 1657, no. 50; "Wien vom 28. Novemb." *WZ:App*, Hamburg 1657, no. 50;

balanced between these two great empires, and if it becomes politically unstable or if the Ottomans seize a firmer control of both the government and the fortresses along the borders, Vienna fears for its own safety and for that of all Christendom.

### Allusions to Religion

The different reporting systems not only affect the primary subject of the news story – i.e. whether the news is of a meeting of the Hungarian Diet or justification for claiming the crown of Poland-Lithuania – but also its corollary subjects. In these reports on Transylvania, religion is rarely the primary focus of a story; rather, it appears through the use of words that are religious in association, within the wider context of narratives of political or military events. These words largely fall into four categories: affiliation (e.g. Christian, Catholic, Reformed), God, the Church, and words with more general religious connotations. These latter two categories are used fairly equally by the two major reporting systems: both Vienna-Hungary and Prussia-Poland reference the people, places, and days associated with the organized Church (e.g. references to priests, churches, Pentecost), and use language which carries general religious associations (e.g. soul, divine, blessed). However, Prussia-Poland is much more likely to offer prayers or supplications to God within the reports of the Transylvanian army, while Vienna-Hungary identifies people, armies, and lands as ‘Christian’ in the face of the Ottoman invasion (see Fig. 3.1).

References to the people, buildings, and days associated with the Church largely appear in the stories of Rákóczi’s invasion of Poland and are included in reports from both the Prussia-Poland and Vienna-Hungary reporting systems. From Prussia-Poland, allusions to the Church include remarks on the King of Sweden’s day of repentance, the cloister of Częstochowa, and the Bishop of Lemberg, as well as more general references to priests and noblemen.<sup>18</sup> From Vienna, there are three references to the upcoming Pentecost telling of Rákóczi’s imminent departure from Transylvania to begin his

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“Extract Schreibens aus Wien vom 3. 13. Febr.” *WZ:Di*, Hamburg 1658, no. 9; “Aliud ab eodem” [Vienna, 28 September] *WZ:App*, Hamburg 1658, no. 41; “Aus Wien den 30. October” *ZAH:R*, Copenhagen 1658; “Aus Wien vom 6. Novemb.” *WZ:Do*, Hamburg 1658, no. 47.

18 “Kurtzer Bericht Welcher gestalt der feste Orth Brescie Litewsky...” *WZ:Do*, Hamburg 1657, no. 23; “Marienburg vom 14. 24. Dito” [April] *WZ:Di*, Hamburg 1657, no. 18; “Extract Schreibens auß Samoiscie den 25. Jan. 1657” *EZ:App*, Stettin 1657, no. 7; “die Pfaffen und Edelleute’ Crakow vom 5. April” *WZ:Do*, Hamburg 1657, no. 17.

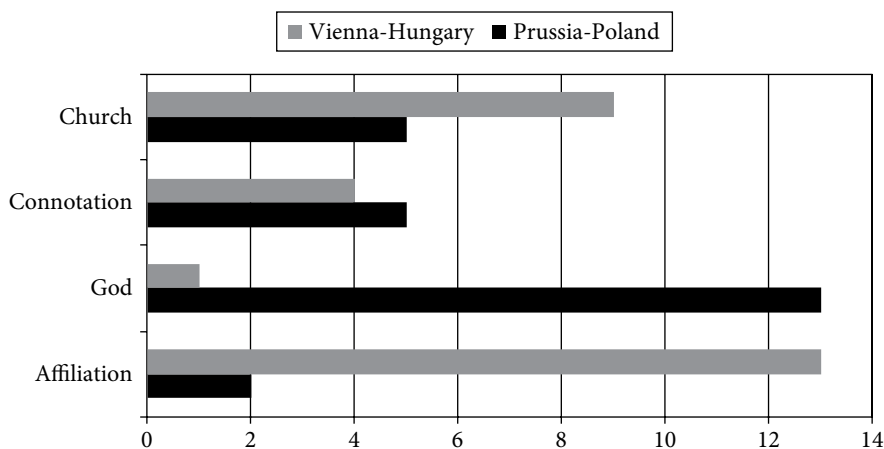


FIGURE 3.1 Number and types of religious references from each reporting system

march into Poland, and a Hungarian bishop recently sent by the Emperor as an envoy to Rákóczi.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, in the news from Poland the words *göttlich* (Godly), *segnen* (bless), and *Oration* appear, and from Elbing, *glücklich* (blessed).<sup>20</sup>

The most remarkable aspect of the news from Prussia-Poland in this regard is the repeated prayers made as Rákóczi leads his Transylvanian and Cossack troops northward in Poland. Of the 25 references to religion in the reports from this reporting system, half are uses of the word 'God': "Praise God!" "Thank God," "God grant that which is good," "God help further," and more are all exclaimed in the reports from Poland.<sup>21</sup> Of these, six come from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, five from Polish Prussia, and one from Brandenburg Prussia. This use of prayer to or praise of God from cities facing

19 "Aus Wien vom 5. Februarii" *WZ:Di*, Hamburg 1657, no. 8; "Aus Wien vom 7. Februarii" *WZ:Do*, Hamburg 1657, no. 8; "Deutschland. *Wien* vom 10. *Feb. st. n.*" *EZ:App*, Stettin 1657, no. 8; "Deutschland. *Wien* vom 10. *Feb. st. n.*" *EZ:App*, Stettin 1657, no. 8.

20 "Eigentlicher und glaubwürdiger Bericht... *sub dato* in dem Königl. Schwedischen Hauptquartier Zavicost den 6. Aprilis Anno 1657" *WZ:Do*, Hamburg 1657, no. 21; "Kurtzer Bericht Welcher gestalt der feste Orth Brescie Litewsky..." *WZ:Do*, Hamburg 1657, no. 23; "Crakow vom 5. April" *WZ:Do*, Hamburg 1657, no. 17; "Elbingen vom 6. 16. Febr." *WZ:Do*, Hamburg 1657, no. 8.

21 "Gott Lob!" and "Er Gott gedancket," *"Elbing vom 10. April. 31. Mart."* *EZ:AppPS*, Stettin 1657, no. 14; "Gott gebe was gutes," "Aliud ab eodem" [Elbing, 13 April] *WZ:Di*, Hamburg 1657, no. 16; "Gotte helffe ferner," "Extract Schreibens aus Crakow vom v. Febr." *WZ:Di*, Hamburg 1657, no. 10.

marching armies reflects an urgent need, a sense of hope or desperation, and gives a sense of immediacy to the events being reported.

Though reporting on the military invasion of a Catholic country by a Reformed prince, there are very few references to religious affiliation within the stories of Prussia-Poland. Furthermore, only one of the references made to affiliation is in the context of Rákóczi's advance: the aforementioned promise to repeat the blessed reign of Báthory (see page 64) and Rákóczi's promise to accommodate the Polish customs and assume their religion.<sup>22</sup> Whether Rákóczi would have fulfilled his bold declaration to embrace the Catholicism of both Poland and Báthory is unknown given his eventual defeat, but it is remarkable that concern for the denominational difference between invader and invaded is only mentioned on one occasion in the 351 reports of the Transylvanian march.

The other reference to religious affiliation from Prussia-Poland comes in the context of another prince of Transylvania making claims for authority, but this time concerning the struggles in the principality. Both a report from Prussia and a report from Vienna describe Rhédey as "a lord of good understanding, the Reformed religion, and middle age" on the occasion of his election to the title of Prince of Transylvania.<sup>23</sup> Barcsai is similarly described in a report from Vienna when he becomes the third named Prince of Transylvania in a year.<sup>24</sup> In the context of the election of the prince of Transylvania, being of the Reformed religion is recognized as merely a common characteristic and is not presented as an association necessitating unease.

By far the most frequently appearing denotation of religious affiliation is that used by Vienna-Hungary as the Ottomans march into Transylvania: 'Christian'. Of the 27 uses of religious language in the stories from Vienna, Hungary, and Transylvania, 11 are of the words *Christen* (Christians), *Christenheit* (Christianity or Christendom), or *Christlich* (Christian). All five of the references in stories from Hungary and Transylvania, and half of those in the stories from Vienna, use these identifiers: for example, "many captured Christians and Hungarians killed," "the Christians on the borders," or "a great number of

22 "daß Er ad exemplum Stephani Battori, den Pohnischen Sitten sich accommodiren und ihre Religion annehmen würde," "Copia eines vertrauten Schreibens aus Dantzig an einen Churfürstl. Brandenburgischen Bedienten *sub dato* 6. Januarii" *WZ:App*, Hamburg 1657, no. 3.

23 "einen Herrn von gutem Verstande/der Reformirten Religion/und mittelmässigen Alters," "Dantzig/vom vorigen" [December] *EWZ:So*, Königsberg 1658, no. 1; "Wien vom 28. Novemb." *WZ:App*, Hamburg 1657, no. 50.

24 "Auß Wien/vom 20. 30. Weinm." *NZR*, Zurich 1658, no. 44.



Christians kidnapped by the Barbarian people.”<sup>25</sup> This usage clearly underscores the unchristianness of the Ottoman Turks, and in the case of reports from Vienna, gives an excuse for sympathy with a country that is more commonly the enemy than the ally. This is further supported by the use of *Seelen* (souls) to describe the Hungarian and Transylvanian people killed or captured by the Turks.<sup>26</sup> While in the case of Rákóczi’s invasion of Poland there is apparently little need to highlight the religious differences of a Reformed prince in a Catholic country, when the Muslim Turks marched into region that acted as a buffer to Christendom, Christianity becomes a unifying characteristic.

Despite the apparent concern from Vienna, Hungary, and Transylvania for the fate of Christendom as the Ottomans advance northwards, their stories contain only one reference to God: “God see to Christendom.”<sup>27</sup> The inclusion of prayers within the news stories of 1657–1658 is a habit resting only with the cities of Poland and Prussia. While the two reporting systems may both include words with religious connotations and references to the Church, religious language is not uniform throughout the news of Transylvania. Reports from Vienna-Hungary are considerably more likely to invoke the differences in religious affiliation between the Ottoman army and the Transylvanian principality, while Prussia-Poland communicates its apprehension through prayers made for protection and thanksgiving.

### Language of Violence

The above analysis of religious language largely ignores the reporting region of the Hereditary Lands as the 91 reports from this region include only two references to religion: the twice-appearing phrase that “much evil has proceeded against the clerics and nobles.”<sup>28</sup> In neither of the stories of Rákóczi’s march

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- 25 “viel gefangene Christen und Ungarn erlediget,” “Auß Siebenbürgen vom 10. 20. *Novemb.*” *EZ:DiPS*, Stettin 1658, no. 50; “die Christen an den Gräntzen,” “Wien vom 6. Decemb.” *WZ:Di*, Hamburg 1657, no. 51; “was für ein grosse anzahl Christen von gedachten Barbarischen Völkern entführet,” “Wien vom 30. Octob.” *WZ:App*, Hamburg 1658, no. 46.
- 26 “die Türcken in die 60,000. Seelen aus Siebenbürgen nach der Türckey weggeführt,” “Wien vom 30. Dito” [October] *WZ:Do*, Hamburg 1658, no. 46; “Wien vom 8. Dito” [May] *WZ:Do*, Hamburg 1658, no. 46.
- 27 “Unsere Gräntzen seynd wol versehen/und warden uber das je länger je besser verwahret/ Gott siehe der Christenheit bey,” “Wien vom 6. Martii.” *WZ:App*, Hamburg 1658, no. 12.
- 28 “wider die Geistlichen unnd Edelleut sehr übel verfahren.” “Schlesien vom 14. Dito” [April] *WZ:Di*, Hamburg 1657, no. 18; “Auß der Schlösen/vom 24. *April*” *RAF*, Strassburg 1657, no. 18.

into Poland, nor the Ottoman advance into Transylvania, are religious affiliations referenced or prayers to God proclaimed. What does mark the stories from the Hereditary Lands is language describing violent acts. It is not the frequency of this usage that is remarkable – these words are no more or less common in the Hereditary reports than in the reports from the two main reporting systems – but their subject area. The violence in these stories appears primarily in reports from Breslau and Silesia and almost exclusively describes the events in Poland. The economic and cultural ties of the region, rather than the political concerns of the Habsburg Emperor, affect which war gains the most attention in reports from these lands.

The language of violence, as considered in this chapter, includes direct descriptions of violent acts or common modifiers. These words detail the willful death of another individual, the destruction of property, and the stealing of goods: all actions that are perpetuated by individuals and groups. Not included in this consideration are those words that communicate acts which take place between armies, such as ‘invade’, ‘attack’, or ‘besiege’. The sixty words designated as ‘violence words’ are divided here into four categories based on frequency of usage (see Table 3.2).<sup>29</sup>

TABLE 3.2 *Vocabulary describing violence in the news stories of Rákóczi, organized by frequency of usage*

A (10+)	B (5-9)	C (2-4)	D (1)
<i>Schaden</i> , damage (23)	<i>niederhauen</i> , to hew-down (9)	<i>plündern</i> , to plunder (4)	<i>abschneiden</i> , to amputate
<i>Gewalt</i> , violence (20)	<i>schießen</i> , to shoot (9)	<i>beängstigen</i> , frighten (3)	<i>entführen</i> , to kidnap
<i>niedermachen</i> , to massacre (20)	<i>Beute</i> , booty (8)	<i>Blut</i> , blood (3)	<i>enthaupten</i> , to behead
<i>brennen</i> , to burn (16)	<i>Furcht</i> , dread (8)	<i>erlegen</i> , to slay (3)	<i>erstechen</i> , to dagger
<i>Ruin</i> , ruin (15)	<i>Bedrohung</i> , threat (7)	<i>sprengen</i> , to burst (3)	<i>Furie</i> , fury

29 The selection and classification of words in this list are based on the author's own analysis of the text. Violence words with the same root appear together, e.g. *Raub* (robbery) and *rauben* (to rob) are both counted under the word *rauben*.

TABLE 3.2 *Vocabulary describing violence in the news stories of Rákóczi, organized by frequency of usage (cont.)*

A (10+)	B (5-9)	C (2-4)	D (1)
<i>verfolgen</i> , to chase (14)	<i>Tod</i> , dead (7)	<i>umbringen</i> , to kill (3)	<i>Lunte</i> , fuse
<i>übel</i> , evil (12);	<i>ernst</i> , severe (5)	<i>anzünden</i> , to ignite (2)	<i>morden</i> , to murder
<i>Feuer</i> , fire (9);	<i>jagen</i> , to chase (5)	<i>erbärmlich</i> , pitiful (2)	<i>Pest</i> , plague
<i>Gefahr</i> , peril (10)	<i>schlecht</i> , bad (6)	<i>grausam</i> , horrible (2)	<i>reißen</i> , to tear
	<i>verwunden</i> , to wound (6)	<i>hauen</i> , to hew (2)	<i>Sklaven</i> , slave
	<i>Asche</i> , ashes (5)	<i>kläglich</i> , wretched (2)	<i>spolieren</i> , to spoil
	<i>ersaufen</i> , to drown (5)	<i>sengen</i> , to scorch (2)	<i>stürzen</i> , to plummet
	<i>rauben</i> , to rob (5)	<i>strangulieren</i> , to strangle (2)	<i>umkommen</i> , to kill
	<i>Schrecken</i> , terror (5)	<i>Tyrannei</i> , tyranny (2)	<i>Verbitterung</i> , acrimony
	<i>schwer</i> , difficult (5)	<i>verheeren</i> , to devastate (2)	<i>verletzen</i> , to injure
	<i>Schwert</i> , sword (5)	<i>verwüsten</i> , to devastate (2)	<i>Verräterei</i> , treacherousness
	<i>trennen</i> , to sever (5)		<i>wüten</i> , to rampage
			<i>zertreten</i> , to trample

Both of the reporting systems that communicate news of Transylvania use words from each frequency category, but with a variation in usage pattern depending on whether the report comes from a reporting centre or from a region that focuses on local news. Words from Category A account for over half of both the 86 uses of this vocabulary of violence from Vienna and the 52 uses in the reports from Prussia (see Fig. 3.2). Meanwhile, the more local branches of each reporting system – Hungary, Transylvania, and Poland – offer

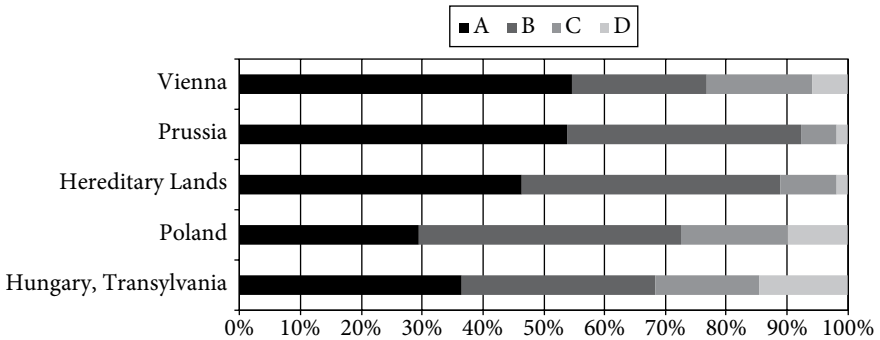


FIGURE 3.2 *Distribution of violence vocabulary by frequency category for each major reporting region*

slightly more varied vocabulary. Of the 41 violence words which appear in the reports of Hungary and Transylvania, and of the 52 violence words which appear in the reports of Poland, less than 40% come from Category A and over 10% are from Category D. Reports from the Hereditary Lands most resemble the news centres in the frequency distribution of violent vocabulary, with 46% of the 54 word uses coming from Category A and only 2% coming from Category D.

What is remarkable about the descriptions of violence from the Hereditary Lands is that they occur almost exclusively in the stories about Rákóczi's invasion of Poland. Even though the cities of the Hereditary Lands contribute 21 reports on the events of the Ottoman actions in Transylvania, these stories only contain one occurrence of a single violence word: *Ruin*. The reports of Rákóczi's march into Poland, on the other hand, contain 55 instances of violence words. Both of the major reporting systems, not unexpectedly, contain more references to the violence of local conflicts. From Prussia-Poland the stories of the Rákóczi's invasion contain 124 instances of violence words, while those of the Ottoman invasion only contain 4. Likewise, the Vienna-Hungary system uses 112 violence words on the military action within Transylvania and only 14 on the Transylvanian aggression in Poland.

However, despite the fact that news of the war in Poland and the news of the war in Transylvania are largely reported from different regions, there is a certain consistency in the language used to describe each conflict's violence. The words from Category A, the most frequently used violence words in these news stories, primarily describe actions such as burning, massacring, and chasing, as well as some of the most fundamental consequences of these actions: 'damage', 'violence', 'ruin', 'fire', and 'peril'. These words appear nearly equally in the

stories of both the military actions in Poland and the invasion of the Ottomans (see Fig. 3.3). However, the words from Category B are not as equally represented in both stories. These words are used a total of 31 times in the stories from Vienna-Hungary and 42 times in the stories from Prussia-Poland, but this scale is tipped even further when the 23 Category B words from the Hereditary Lands are added. As a consequence, the words from Category B are much more likely to appear in the stories of Poland (see Fig. 3.4), and include words which give more nuance to a narrative. Words for bodily harm include those where a specific weapon or means is implied, as in to 'shoot', 'drown', and 'sever', as well as adjectives describing the seriousness of injury – 'bad', 'difficult', 'severe' – and words which indicate a personal, emotional response, such as 'dread', 'threat', and 'terror'.

Each reporting system communicates news of the violence of the most immediate importance to the reporting location: Prussia-Poland tells of the actions of the Transylvanian army in Poland, while Vienna-Hungary details the events which come as a consequence of the Ottoman invasion. This is also true for the news coming from the Hereditary Lands. Though the Hereditary Lands are strongly connected to the city of Vienna – the lands are ruled by the Habsburg Emperor – and though nearly a quarter of their total news reports pertain to events between the Transylvanians and the Ottomans, this is not the news that is seemingly of the most importance to this region. Rather, when this region gives details beyond the basic actions of war, when it conveys dread or severity, or details death by drowning, the news related is of the conflict in

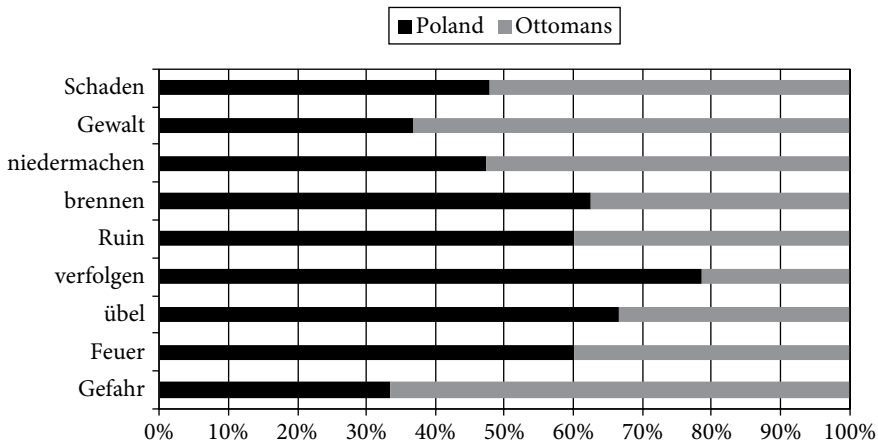


FIGURE 3.3 *Distribution of words from Category A between stories about Poland and stories about the Ottomans*

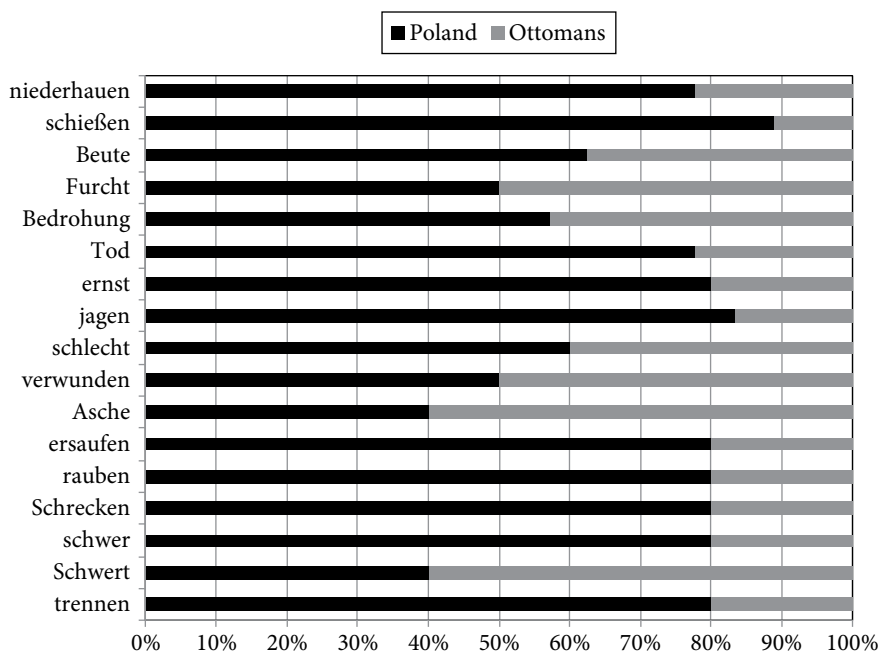


FIGURE 3.4 *Distribution of words from Category B between stories about Poland and stories about the Ottomans*

Poland, much nearer geographically and of more immediate concern than any Imperial worries about the Turks.

### Conclusion

The news of Transylvania that is communicated in the German language newspapers of 1657–1658, is largely determined by the interests of the reporting systems of Vienna-Hungary and Prussia-Poland. While there are a handful of stories from the principality itself, primarily reporting on actions within the Transylvanian diet, this number is overwhelmed by that of news reports coming from foreign locations, each concentrating on their own local interests. In the reports from Prussia-Poland, accounts are centred on Rákóczi's march into Poland-Lithuania to meet the Swedish army and take the throne. The urgency of this action is underscored by the repeated prayers to God within the text of the reports, as well the language of violence employed, not to communicate the movements of the army, but to describe the killing, plundering, burning, fear, and destruction that results. While the religious language is not continued in

the reports from the Hereditary Lands, the images of violence are. Though this region has political ties through the Imperial crown to both Vienna and Hungary, its news of Transylvania comes chiefly through Silesia and Breslau, and the cultural and economic ties of the region inspire not only a great deal of communication with Poland-Lithuania, but also a greater apparent interest in the violence of the war in Poland. The reporting system of Vienna-Hungary, on the other hand, reports more frequently on the events within the principality, especially as the government becomes increasingly unstable and the Ottomans march on Transylvania. The violence of these events is still expressed, but rather than supplementing the news with prayers for peace and protection, the reports from Vienna-Hungary call attention to the religious affiliation of the advancing army, emphasizing the fear that if the Ottomans are successful in their attack and Transylvania falls more directly under Turkish control, there will be dire consequences not only for its own city and lands, but for all of Christendom.

## Appendix

### *Extant Issues of German Language Newspapers from 1657–1658*

Bibliographic information comes from Else Bogel and Elger Blühm, *Die deutschen Zeitungen des 17. Jahrhunderts: ein Bestandverzeichnis mit historischen und bibliographischen Angaben* (Bremen: Schünemann Universitätsverlag, 1971–1985).

Titles given are those which act as headings in the above work, with subheadings appearing for the names carried by the newspapers from 1657–1658. When names of the printers are given, they are those who held the position from 1657–1658. Abbreviations designated by the author.

*Continuation Deß jüngst zwischen beyde Königliche Schwedische vnd Polnische Armeen zugetrgenen Kriegs-verlauffs.* Frankfurt a. M.: n.p.

*Continuation Deß jüngst zwischen beyde Königliche Schwedische vnd Polnische Armeen zugetrgenen Kriegs-verlauffs.*

1657: 17, 32

*Continuation Deß jüngst zwischen beyden König. Schwedischen/ Polnischen*

*vnd Dähnenmarckischen Armeen zugetrgenen Kriegsverlauffs.*

1658: 1–3, 5–22, 27, 28, 33–37, 39, 40, 47–72, 74, 76–79, 91–107, 109, 112–115, 118–125, 127, 129–135, 136–138

*Absonderliche Relation*

1658: 59

*Dingstags (Freytags) Particular.* Danzig: David Friedrich Rhete

*P:Di* *Dingstags (Dinstags, Dienstags) PARTICULAR*

1657: 45, 46, 48, 50

1658: 2, 24, 31

*P:Fr* *Freytags PARTICULAR*

1657: 46, 47, 49, 51, 51 [=52]

1658: 2, 3, 13, 19

*P:Sa* *Sonnabends PARTICULAR*

1657: 30, 51

1658: 4, 6

*Europaeische Wochentliche Zeitung, Europaeische Ordinari Postzeitung.* Königsberg:  
Johann Reußner

*EWZ* *Europaeische Wochentliche Zeitung*

1657: 45

*EWZ:Eop* *Europaeische Ordinari Postzeitung*

1657: 45

*EWZ:Do* *Donnerstags PARTICULAR Zeitung Zur Numer...gehörig*

1657: 36, 48, 50–52

1658: II, III, XII, XIX, XXI, XXXXIII

*EWZ:Fr* *Freytags PARTICULAR Zeitung Zur Numer...gehörig*

1657: 46, 49

*EWZ:So* *Sontags Europaeischer MERCURIUS*

1658: I, III, VI, XI, XXIV, XXX, XXXIIX

*EWZ:Sa* *Sonnabends RELATION, Zum Europaeischen Mercurius Numer...gehörig*

1658: V

*EWZ:App* *Europaeischer APPENDIX*

1658: V, XV, XX

*Europaeische Zeitung.* Stettin: Johann Valentin Rhete

*EZ* *Europaeische Zeitüg*

1657: 2, 7, 8, 11, 14

*EZ:Ps* *Particular Schreiben: ...Zun Europaeischen Num. ...1657. Gehörig*

1657: 7, 11, 12, No. 1 and 2

*EZ:App* *APPENDIX Europaeischer Zeitungen/von Num...*

1657: 2, 7, 8, 11–13, 15, 32–34, 52

*EZ:AppPS* *Particular Schreiben...Zum Appendice Num. ...1657 gehörig*

1657: 7, 10, 12–14, 33

*EZ:Di* *Europaeische Dingstägl. Zeitüg*

1658: 37, 48



*EZ:DiPS*     *Particular-Schreiben: Zu No...Anno...Europaeisher Dingstägl. Zietungen*  
gehörig

1658: 49, 50

*EZ:Sa*     *Europaeische Samstägl. Zeitüg*

1658: 13

*Neue Vnpartheysche Zeittung vnd Relation.* Zürich: Offizin Bodmer

*NZR*     *Ordinari Wochenzeitung*

1657: I, III–V, X, XIII–XV, XVIII, XX–XXV, XXVII, XXX, XXXII–XXXVIII,  
XL, XLII, XLIV, XLVI, XLVIII, XLIX, LII, LIII

1658: I–VIII, X–XII, XIV[=XV], XVI–XX, XXII–XLII,  
XLIV–XLIX, LI

*Ordenliche Wochentliche PostZeitungen.* München: Lucas Straub.

*Ordentliche Wochentliche Post(–)Zeitungen/dises...Jahrs.*

1658: I–XXIII, XXIX–XLV, XLVII–XLX[=L], XLVII–XXXXXI[=LII]

(gaps and repetitions are due to misnumbering)

*Ordinari Wochentliche PostZeitungen.* Erfurt: n.p.

*Ordinari Wochentliche PostZeitungen*

1658: 97, 99

*Extraordinari einkommene Zeitungen*

1658: 98, 102, 104

*Ordinari Zeittung.* Wien: Mattäus Cosmervius

*Extraordinari Mittwochs PostZeitungen*

1658: DCCLXIV, DCCXXVIII

*Ordinari Zeitung.* München: Johann Jäcklin

*Mercurij(i) Relation Oder Zeit(t)ungen/von uviderschidlichen Ort(h)en/*

*Auff das...Jahr*

1658: 1–52

*Particular Zeitung.* n.p.: n.p.

*Particular Zeitung*

1657: 9, 14–16, 44–46, 51, 53, 54

1658: 1, 12

*Particular-Zeitung.* Danzig: n.p.

1657: 11

*Postzeitungen.* Prag: Ludmilla Sedlčanska

*Ordinari Wochentliche Mitwochs Postzeitungen*

1658: CLXXXVIII

*Extraordinari Wochentliche Postzeitungen*

1658: CLXXXVII

*Post Zeitung.* Hamburg: Johann Baptista Vrints

*HPZ:M Europaeische Mitwochentliche Zeitung*

1657: 6, 9, 17, 28, 35, 41, 42, 48, 49–53

1658: 7, 10, 12, 16, 21, 29, 47

*HPZ:Sa Europaesche Samstägige Zeitung*

1657: 15, 21, 22, 27, 29, 42, 46, 50, 52

1658: 2, 3, 16, 17, 28, 38, 42, 47, 53

*Raporten.* Köln: Caspar Kempen

*Ordinari Wochentliche Dinstags Postzeitungen*

1657: III

*Relation Aller Fürnemmen vnd gedenckwürdigen Historien.* Straßburg: n.p.

*RAF Zeitung*

1657: 18

*Titellose Zeitung.* Berlin: Offizin Runge

*B:O B. Einkommende Ordinar- und Postzeitungen*

1658: XXXVIII: III, XXXIX: I, XL: III, LII: I, II

*B:E B. Extraordinari(-)Zeitungen*

1658: 'Holstein, 6/16. 8.', 'Hamburg 13/23. 11.', 'Holstein 26. 11.',  
'Elbstrom 29. 11.', 'Stettin 19. 12.'

*Titellose Zeitung (Frankfurter Postzeitung).* Frankfurt a. M.: Johann Baptist Höswinkel

*OWP Ordentliche Wochentliche Postzeitungen*

1657: III, V, VIII, XVIII–XX, XXXVIII, XXXIX

*Wochentliche Ordinari-Post-Zeitungen.* n.p.: n.p.

*Wochentliche Ordinari-Post-Zeitungen*

1657: 28, [47?]

1658: 2

*Wochentliche Zeitung Auß Hamburg.* Kopenhagen: Peter Hake

*ZAH Wochentliche Zeitung Auß Hamburg*

1657: 27, 29, 30, 32–36, Sec. 36, 37–48, Sec. 48, 49, 50

- ZAH:M     *Mitwochentliche Zeitung*  
1657: 'Prag 20.9.'
- ZAH:H     *Ordinarie Wochentliche Zeitung auß Hamburg*  
1658: I
- ZAH:D     *Ordinarie Wochentliche Zeitung/auß Deutschlandt*  
1658: Sec. 12
- ZAH:WR    *Warhafftige RELATION, Von Unter schiedenen Oertern/aus Deutschlandt*  
1658: 'Myttaw 6.10.'
- ZAH:R     *RELATION Aus Unterschiedlichen frebden Orten*  
1658: '16. 11.'
- ZAH:ER    *Europaeische RELATION Auß Unterschiedlichen frembden Oertern.*  
1658: '15. 12.'

*Wöchentliche Zeitung auß mehrerley örther.* Hamburg: Martin Schumacher

- WZ:Di     *Ordinari Diengstags Zeitung*  
1657: 1–53  
1658: 2–52
- WZ:Do     *Wochentliche Donnerstags Zeitung*  
1657: 1–52  
1658: 1–52
- WZ:App    *APPENDIX Der Wochentlichen Zeitung Von Numero...*  
1657: 1–52  
1658: 1–21, 23–52

The following papers appear in Bogel and Blühm's bibliography but do not appear in my analysis:

- Extraordinary Sontags-Zeitung.* n. p.: n.p. 1658: 49.  
*Ordinari Sontags-Zeiutng.* n. p.: n.p. 1657: 12.



## PART 2

### *Exploring the Boundaries*

News for Entertainment, Propaganda, and Satire





## News of the Sussex Dragon\*

Andrew Hadfield

Although there were a number of claims that dragons populated ancient and modern Europe, there was only one recorded sighting of a dragon in early modern England.<sup>1</sup> This is the famous pamphlet, *True and Wonderful: A Discourse relating a strange and monstrous serpent (or dragon) lately discovered, and yet living, to the great annoyance and divers slaughters both of men and cattell, by his strong and violent poison, in Sussex two miles from Horsham, in a woode called S. Leonards Forrest, this present month of August, 1614. With the true generation of serpents.*<sup>2</sup> St. Leonards was not one of England's largest forests, and would seem to have been an unlikely place for a dragon to make its home, let alone a colony. Nevertheless, the forest commemorates the existence of the frightening beast, which has become a noted attraction, and the claim that "Dragons used to roam in St Leonard's Forest, or so the local legend goes" can be read in a number of places on the internet, which does not quite represent the pamphlet's claim that one beast terrorized Horsham's inhabitants.<sup>3</sup>

The reason for the persistence of this claim probably has a great deal to do with the pamphlet's particular publishing history, and the ways in which it has been reproduced since the early seventeenth century. In a rather sardonic account of West Sussex superstitions published in 1878 the Sussex folklorist Charlotte Latham commented on the credulity of that side of the county's rural inhabitants:

From time immemorial, snakes or serpents so big that they looked like dragons have terrified the population of our rural districts, and during the past year what is called in our expressive dialect 'an oudacious large

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\* A version of this chapter previously appeared in *Reformation*, 17 (2012), pp. 99–113, <http://www.maneypublishing.com/journals/ref> and <http://www.metapress.com/content/122842>. The editors are grateful to Maney Publishing for permission to republish this material.

1 Edward Topsell, *The Historie of Serpents. Or, The Second Booke of Liuing Creatures* (London, 1608), pp. 153–174. I am extremely grateful to Anne Lake Prescott and Hannibal Hamlin for their comments on earlier drafts of this essay which improved it significantly.

2 (London, 1614), STC 20569.

3 <http://roadsofstone.com/2009/05/12/209-a-dragon-slain-on-doomsday-horsham-10-km> (accessed 27 June 2012).

one' was said to be in this neighbourhood. Its lair was near a by-path, which it would not permit any one to traverse. It would rush out and drive back with a terrible hissing and a very bad smell any luckless wight who wandered in that direction. This audacious snake is doubtless a relation of the dragon serpent reported to have inhabited St. Leonard's forest in the seventeenth century, and which (says the author of the 'true and wonderful' account of it) was oftentimes seen 'at a place called Faygate, and it hath been seen within half a mile of Horsham, a wonder, no doubt, most terrible and noisome to the inhabitants thereabouts.'<sup>4</sup>

More recently Jeremy Harte surveyed early references to the serpent and concluded that the creature "had acquired a name and reputation which lasted nearly eighty years after its first media appearance." Like his predecessor, he could not resist a somewhat sarcastic comment on the persistence of the story:

It is a pity that the chapmen seem simply to have copied the original pamphlet instead of nosing out fresh reports, otherwise St Leonard's Forest might have become the Loch Ness of the south.<sup>5</sup>

In this chapter I will first uncover how the pamphlet has been published and read, before analysing what the original pamphlet, a relatively substantial work of twenty pages in black letter type, might have meant and how it might have been read in the early seventeenth century. In essence two traditions of interpretation have developed: one which asks whether the pamphlet refers to a real or mythical beast, based on the work as it appeared in print, and another which is interested in popular publishing and print in early modern England. The first takes what is in the popular public realm at face value; the second wants to think about popular print culture, and depends on access to research libraries as well as an academic mode of research. In the first type of analysis the key question is whether the dragon ever actually existed, whether the well-established folk tale has any real basis in fact; in the second, this truth/falsehood claim is effectively irrelevant and the real issue is why anyone would want to publish such an apparently absurd pamphlet, who read it, why they did, and whether the work had any substantial impact on the ways in which they thought about the human and animal worlds.

4 Charlotte Latham, "Some West Sussex Superstitions Lingered in 1868," *The Folklore Record*, 1 (1878), pp. 1–67, 15.

5 Jeremy Harte, "The Sussex Serpent," *Folklore*, 105 (1994), pp. 103–104.



### Selective Evidence

Like so many early modern pamphlets, only one copy of *A Discourse relating a strange and monstrous serpent (or dragon) lately discovered* survives in the Bodleian Library. Until it became more straightforward to access such material with the advent of Pollard and Redgrave's STC in 1926, such works remained hidden to the public. However, the pamphlet did reach a wide audience after it was included in the extracts from the Earl of Oxford's library that made up the *Harleian Miscellany*, Volume 3, in 1745. The text was severely truncated and the second part of the work advertised in the title, "the true generation of serpents," was omitted, along with all other comments on the history of dragons which made up the largest part of the text. Instead we have the relatively short part of the pamphlet that describes the existence and sighting of the dragon, so that readers would have encountered the text as though it were an eyewitness account not embedded in a larger narrative.<sup>6</sup> The description starts with "In Sussex, there is a pretty market-town called Horsham," proceeding to:

near unto it a forest, called St. Leonards forest, and there, in a vast and unfrequented place, healthie, vaulty, full of unwholesome shades, and overgrown hollows, where this serpent is thought to be bred: but, wheresoever bred, certain and too true it is that there it yet lives.

The style here should give us some pause for thought, given its self-conscious literariness, one that resembles the ironic mode of the two folklore articles rather than the anticipated style of the 'eye'/'I' witness account.<sup>7</sup>

We are told that a dragon's trail is like that of an especially dangerous and noxious snail, and can cause considerable harm to any humans exposed to its odours. The serpent itself is nine feet long and shaped "almost in the form of an axletree of a cart," thickest in the middle and smaller at each end. The head,

which he shoots forth as a neck, as it were, is supposed to be an ell long [about 18 inches], with a long white ring, as it were, of scales about it.

The scales on the serpent's back are "blackish," and those under its belly, red. Obviously, accurate descriptions are hard to make, given the danger of

6 Reprint copies on demand, such as the text by Bibliolife, are advertised as though they were the original pamphlet, but are taken from the *Harleian Miscellany* text.

7 Elaine Y.L. Ho, "The Rhetoric of the 'I' – Witness in Fulke Greville's *The Life of Sir Philip Sidney*," *Literature and History*, 2nd series, 2.1 (1991), pp. 17–26.

approaching the beast. Observers claim that it has two large feet, but the pamphleteer is not sure, as serpents do not usually have feet but glide on their stomachs. Whatever the case may be the serpent can move “as fast as a man can run,” which presumably causes his proud countenance and the arrogance with which he surveys the territory when men or cattle are around. Finally the author notes that the dragon/serpent has bunches on either side of him the size of footballs that may grow into wings, which would make him an especially terrifying and dangerous neighbour for the residents of Horsham.

For now the worst that the serpent/dragon can manage is to “cast his venom” 4 rods (some 25 yards):

as by woefull experience it was proved on the bodies of a man and a woman coming that way, who afterwards were found dead, being poisoned and very much swelled, but not preyed upon.

This sounds distinctly odd, as it would surely be impossible for the witness to have told the author that he knew that these dead bodies were hit from a distance of 25 yards. The evidence presented here bears a striking resemblance to the tales of cannibalism in the New World, when the bones left after an abandoned meal were cited as proof positive that man-eating had taken place.<sup>8</sup> Fortunately there is rather better evidence to conclude this section: a man who chased the dragon with his mastiffs had to flee and the dogs were killed by the beast. Strangely, and counter-intuitively, they were not eaten and were left whole, the rather particular dragon preferring a diet of rabbits from the numerous local warrens.<sup>9</sup> A number of witnesses testify to the truth of the story, having seen this serpent “beside divers others” (details of which are not mentioned). These include “the carrier [the postman] at Horsham, who lieth at the White Horse, in Southwark”; John Steele; Christopher Holder; “And a Widow Woman dwelling near Faygate.”

The fact that this particular extract has been reproduced has clearly had an impact on the ways in which the story has been understood, what it has been thought to mean, what it tells us, and on the nature of the text. The apparently precise nature of the description of the dragon and the reference to eye-witnesses has led a number of commentators to try to work out exactly what this mysterious beast can have been. Susan C. Djabri weighs up the evidence

8 Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492–1797* (London: Methuen, 1986), pp. 80–81.

9 Jeremy Knight and Jason Semmens (eds.), *Horsham's Dragon* (Horsham: Horsham Museum Society, 2007), introduction, pp. 17–18.

and concludes that the dragon was undoubtedly a cobra.<sup>10</sup> She argues that there was no history of creatures that could have been mistaken for dragons living in the area, beasts which could have fuelled the legend, and that it is most likely that a very large cobra had somehow been brought back from the Far East and thrived in English conditions. The suggestion may not be as absurd as some readers might assume – obviously the wings are mistaken, as are the feet. There is a long-standing and often repeated story of a similar case of a misplaced exotic beast. A crocodile was apparently brought back from the Crusades by Richard the Lionheart and kept in the Tower of London before it escaped and started to breed in the Essex marshes. This has been cited as the origin of the story of another dragon in the Suffolk village of Bures in 1405, a descendant of Richard's pet, perhaps also represented in a wall-painting in nearby Wissington Church.<sup>11</sup>

### Scepticism and Cynicism

There is another way of reading the story. Evidence would suggest that the pamphlet was greeted by a certain amount of scepticism from early modern readers, perhaps even by most of them. Indeed, the publisher of the pamphlet, John Trundle, was notorious in the early seventeenth century for the wealth of dubious texts that he produced. Trundle mainly published ephemera and a large number of his products survive in only one edition or have been lost.<sup>12</sup> Indeed he became something of a byword for unreliable and exploitative publication.<sup>13</sup> Trundle was attacked directly in a number of subsequent works, notably *Lachrymae Londinenses: Or Londons teares and lamentations, for Gods visitation of the plague of pestilence* (1626), a pious collection of writings responding to the latest outbreak of serious contagious disease in London,

10 Susan C. Djabri, "The 'Dragon' of St. Leonard's Forest," *Horsham Heritage*, 14 (Spring 2006), pp. 3–16.

11 Djabri, "Dragon," p. 12; <http://www.bures-online.co.uk/dragon/dragon.htm> (accessed 27 June 2012). How the crocodile bred unless already pregnant or not alone is not clear (I owe this point to Mary Yarnold).

12 Gerald D. Johnson, "John Trundle and the Book-Trade, 1603–1626," *Studies in Bibliography*, 39 (1986), pp. 178–199, 197–198. For details of Trundle's publications (1603–1629), see Katharine F. Pantzer (ed.), *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad: Vol. 3* (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1991), p. 171.

13 Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 45–74.

which concluded with a series of prayers for the new monarch, Charles I, and his family. The anonymous author sarcastically refuted the:

Spuriall pamphlets, which the presse hath of late spewed out, (broods of Barbican, Smithfield, and the Bridge, and Trundled, trolled and marshalled up and downe along the streets[...]

This was a palpable hit at the excesses of popular culture and a sharp reminder of this work's superior status as an appropriate response to the current crisis.<sup>14</sup> Another pamphlet, *A True Report and Exact Description of a Mighty Sea-Monster, or Whale, cast upon Langar shore over against Harwich in Essex, this present moneth of Febrarie 1617* (1617), makes similar complaints about the sensational nature of other pamphlets, which also seems to target Trundle. The anonymous author of this pamphlet contrasts the verifiable nature of his observations with those that “busse and abuse” the “eies and eares” of readers,

with any fond fables of flying Serpents, or as fond delusions of devouring Dragons, of Men or women burned to death miraculously without fire, of dead men rising out of their graves [...] which is directly against the truth of the revealed will of God in the sacred Scriptures.

As the Sussex Dragon is the only pamphlet describing a dragon in early seventeenth-century England, then Trundle's work must be what this anonymous author has in mind.<sup>15</sup> Just as the properly religious discourse of the anti-plague collection of prayers dismisses the excesses of Trundle, so does the true eyewitness account of a real monster.

These attacks against Trundle's sensational pamphlets – there were many others – are made on two grounds: first, that they are ungodly in style and substance.<sup>16</sup> Second, that they are untrue, duplicitous, and are fundamentally lies, the two reasons being clearly connected in the minds of these critics and authors of true pamphlets. It should come as no surprise to learn that Trundle published work by Anthony Nixon, the notorious plagiarist, further indicating

14 Anon., *Lachrymae Londinenses* (1626), STC 16573, sigs B2<sup>r-v</sup>; Johnson, “John Trundle,” p. 179.

15 (London, 1617), STC 20892.

16 For other attacks, see Johnson, “John Trundle,” p. 179; Julie Crawford, “Oral Culture and Popular Print” in Joad Raymond (ed.), *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture: Volume 1: Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 114–129, 123–124.

just how unscrupulous he could be in the pursuit of profit.<sup>17</sup> In part, such attacks are a sign of how book traders kept a careful eye on what was taking place elsewhere within the profession, working out how best they could manoeuvre the market to their own advantage. In pushing the boundaries of what might be published Trundle was trying to open up spaces for his own works; his rivals were doing their best to restrict his opportunities.

But the argument cannot simply be reduced to market forces. There is, of course, a generic link between the godly prayers of *Lachrymae Londinenses*, the pamphlet about the sea-monster, and Trundle's account of the Sussex dragon, which all fit into a long tradition of attacks on the ungodly nature of the present manifested in a series of strange and troubling monstrosities which are a sign of God's displeasure at the transgression of mankind.<sup>18</sup> The popular print world of early modern England was flooded with works that made quasi-theological sense of troubling, apparently inexplicable recent events, such as the earthquake of 6 April 1580, as part of an over-arching providential scheme.<sup>19</sup> As Peter Lake and Michael Questier have pointed out, such messy, intermingled, and potentially contradictory discourses of fate, providence, God's judgement, and the desire to read the sensational, are characteristic of the style and substance of popular news pamphlets. Numerous pamphlets told tales of gory murders, which divine providence exposed, resulting in the brutal but justified punishment of the perpetrator, stories that enabled the reader to

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- 17 Johnson, "John Trundle," p. 197. On Nixon, see Lambert Ennis, "Anthony Nixon: Jacobean Plagiarist and Hack," *the Huntington Library Quarterly*, 3 (1940), pp. 377–401.
  - 18 See Rudolf Wittkower, "Marvels of the East: A Study in the History of Monsters," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 5 (1942), pp. 159–197.
  - 19 Thomas Twyne, *A Shorte and Pithie Discourse, concerning the engendering, tokens, and effects of all Earthquakes in Generall* (London, 1580); Thomas Churchyard, *A warning for the wise, a feare to the fond, a bridle to the lewde, and a glasse to the good Written of the late earthquake chanced in London and other places, the. 6. of April 1580* (London, 1580); Arthur Golding, *A discourse vpon the earthquake that hapned throughe this realme of Englande, and other places of Christendom, the first of Aprill. 1580* (London, 1580); Abraham Fleming, *A bright burning beacon forewarning all wise virgins to trim their lampes against the comming of the Bridegroom. Containing a generall doctrine of sundrie signes and wonders, specially earthquakes both particular and generall: a discourse of the end of this world: a commemoration of our late earthquake, the 6. of April* (London, 1580); Anon., *The order of prayer, and other exercises, vpon Wednesdays and Frydayes, to auert and turne Gods wrath from vs, threatned by the late terrible earthquake: to be vsed in all parish churches and houtholdes throughout the realme* (London, 1580). Later works looked back to the event: see, for example, James Yates, *The castell of courtesie whereunto is adioyned the holde of humilitie: with the chariot of chastitie thereunto annexed* (London, 1582), sigs G3<sup>r-v</sup>.

enjoy the prurient details of the reported crime, before understanding that such behaviour really did not pay.<sup>20</sup>

A major part of Trundle's trade was in this kind of literary artefact. His other significant publication of 1614 was a combined pamphlet with another carefully directed title, *A miracle, of miracles As fearefull as euer was seene or heard of in the memorie of man. Which lately happened at Dicheat in Sommersetshire, and sent by diuers credible witnesses to be published in London. Also a prophesie reuealed by a poore countrey maide, who being dead the first of October last, 1613. 24. houres, reuiued againe, and lay fwe dayes weeping, and continued prophesying of strange euent to come, and so died the 5. day following. Witnessed by M. Nicholas Faber, parson of the towne, and diuers worthy gentlemen of the same countrey. 1613, withall, Lincolnshire teares. For a great deluge, in which fwe vilages were lamentably drovned this present month (1614).*<sup>21</sup> The last of these three stories bears a close resemblance to the tale of the sea-monster and concerns an empirically verifiable event, linked to the familiar discourse of providence and God's displeasure with the sins of contemporary England. The second story, reprinted from a pamphlet of 1580 (with no acknowledgement),<sup>22</sup> took place in Germany. It involves the saintly behaviour of a poor man's daughter who died, returned to life, and berated her family for their sins, warning them of God's wrath, before dying in earnest: another narrative that fits straightforwardly into the conflicted and confused mode of popular providential pamphlets. By far the most interesting story is the first one, which is appropriately illustrated on the front cover. This concerns an unfortunate event in Dicheat in the shadow of the Mendip Hills in Somerset, related by the village parson Nicholas Faber, and was also a revised and expanded version of an earlier work (again unacknowledged), this time a pamphlet originally published in 1584.<sup>23</sup> A woman in this village was tormented by the Devil who appeared beside her bed looking "much like unto a Beare, but it had no head nor tayle," as is shown in the woodcut published on the title page.<sup>24</sup> She is afflicted

20 Peter Lake with Michael Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists & Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), pt. 2; Peter Lake, "Religion and Cheap Print" in Raymond (ed.), *Oxford History of Popular Print Culture: Volume 1*, pp. 217–241. See also Sandra Clark, *Women and Crime in the Street Literature of Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003); Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 444.

21 STC 14068.

22 Johnson, "John Trundle," p. 194.

23 Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 124.

24 Walsham, *Providence*, p. 188.

because of her sins, but she repents and God decides that she has suffered enough and banishes the Devil, a warning to all concerned to live lives free from blemish and to trust in God's providence.

Trundle obviously realized that there was a lucrative market for this sort of publication and the number of attacks on the Sussex Dragon pamphlet indicate that he succeeded in making his work widely known, even if not greatly admired. Whether he was a practical businessman, perhaps a cynical one, who simply saw the market potential of the material he published, or someone closely bound up with the intellectual ethos of what he published is hard to determine in the absence of further evidence. Trundle was certainly adept at combining different modes and styles of writing, mixing the godly with the sensational and making use of whatever printing resources he had to hand, notably other publishers' printing devices and blocks.<sup>25</sup> The fact that he was an active publisher of plays, seeing works by John Day, Thomas Dekker, Robert Greene, Thomas Rowley, William Shakespeare, and others into print, suggests that he was deeply immersed in the world of the theatre and probably understood what people who liked drama wanted to read.<sup>26</sup> But if one co-ordinate of such pamphlets was their sensational nature, appealing to an audience who wanted to see spectacle on stage, the other was a need for truth. The story of the woman and the headless bear-devil ends, as the Sussex Dragon pamphlet does, with a declaration and naming of local witnesses. Stephen Cooper, John Cooper, Alice Easton, John Thompson, John Anderton, Miles Foster, "with divers others," are cited to confirm that what has been narrated "is most true." In making such claims, which were extremely unlikely ever to be tested, these pamphlets were predicting the nature of the assaults that would be ranged against them and so attempting to nullify criticism. The issue and nature of truth is a central concern to which the pamphlets draw our attention, attempting in some way to overcome a predicted sceptical response, one that, as author and publisher predicted, the pamphlets received.

### Dragons, Good and Bad

Even among the odd ephemera that make up the vast range of early popular printed pamphlets and books, the Sussex Dragon is an especially unusual

25 Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 227, *passim*; R. B. McKerrow, "Edward Aldee as a Typical Trade Printer," *The Library*, 4th series, 10 (1929–30), pp. 121–162.

26 Gerald D. Johnson, "John Busby and the Stationers' Trade, 1590–1612," *The Library*, 6th series, 7 (1985), pp. 1–15.

pamphlet which deserves further exploration. As has often been pointed out, it was written by an extremely learned writer who had a large classical library at his disposal as well as some expensive English books, although it also needs to be noted that a number of his stories are taken directly from Edward Topsell's *History of Serpents*, published six years earlier and clearly already popular as an encyclopaedia of exotic beasts.<sup>27</sup> The mysterious A.R., who may well have gone to Oxford, which had close links to Horsham in this period, cites a number of lines of Latin and Greek writers, all signalled in the margins. These include Plato, Macrobius, Plutarch, Suetonius, Aristotle, Lucan, Seneca, and Pliny, all common works in university libraries, as well as Holinshed and the Bible, indicating that he had received a standard university education. Moreover, in his disquisition on dragons that makes up the substance of the pamphlet he ranges more widely still. He refers to Irish history and topography, repeating the familiar legend from Gerald of Wales that the island was blessed with the absence of serpents (sig. B1<sup>r</sup>); he describes and discusses the significance of a number of examples of dragons appearing throughout Europe in the middle ages (sigs B1<sup>r</sup>-B2<sup>r</sup>); and tells a story of Socrates looking through his optic glass and seeing two dragons infecting the air with their horrid breath (sig. B3<sup>r</sup>). More salaciously, A.R. discusses how dragons copulate, a feature the pamphlet advertises on the title page, and an indication that the pamphlet should never really have been read as a simple eyewitness account that could be confirmed as true or dismissed as false. According to A.R. in his zoological mode, Serpents/dragons,

in this action [copulation], seme to be one body, and two heads: for they are so indivisibly united together and the frame of their body unapt for any other manner of copulation. And although like to fishes they want floure to elaborate the sperme, yet have they two open passages wherein lyeth their generation seed; which being spreade procureth their venereal lustes; which seeded being circulated from the male, into cels and receptacles of the female, it is framed into an egge, which she hideth in the earthe (sigs A4<sup>v</sup>-B1<sup>r</sup>).

The text continues to an even more salacious section about the sexual relations between dragons and humans, notably a tale from Plutarch in which a woman has a dragon lover:

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27 Knight and Semmens (eds), *Horsham's Dragon*, introduction, p. 11.



who came to her every night and did her no harme, but gently sliding over her playd with her till morning, departing away assone as light appeared, least he should be discovered[...] (sig. B2<sup>r</sup>).

Obviously the plot went wrong at some point and Plutarch, or his source, found out. Then the work turns in a more moral direction, informing readers that dragons could act in rather more decent ways too, as A.R. repeats a tale from Suetonius about an impressively upright dragon who deliberately frightens an “incestuous son” who is having an affair with his mother, “and parted them asunder” in order to restore proper order (sig. B2<sup>r</sup>). The moral of the story is simple enough: it is the fault of mankind that dragons have been transformed into malign creatures, as their nature is essentially friendly and co-operative:

Now as these hideous creatures are hurtfull to man, so also are they most inamoured of man: and if there be any trueth or veritie to be ascribed to histories: they haue been most passionately affected to man woman and child: which shoves that it is a worke of diuinitie as a iust punishment of our sinnes, to turne their affable natures to a most rauenous and deuouring crueltie (sig. B1<sup>v</sup>).

The sentence could be read as a straightforward piece of credulous assumption, a logical deduction from an observation in line with that produced in *A True Report and Exact Description of a Mighty Sea-Monster, or Whale*. Or it could be read as a more knowing statement that implicitly acknowledges and encourages readers to either be credulous or to join the author in distancing themselves from other gullible readers. The hypothetical “if there be any trueth or veritie to be ascribed to histories,” could be read to undermine all that follows, making the assumption that dragons were once good and have now gone bad, a cutting parody of the sort of logic that abounds in other pamphlets of miraculous and strange natural phenomena.

However we read it, the mode of writing in the first section of *A Discourse relating a strange and monstrous serpent* is significantly different from that contained in the other works under discussion here, a further sign of the mixed and heterogeneous mode of the news pamphlet, but also one that might give us pause for thought about what is taking place in the work. Of course, as the tradition of the Sussex dragon was developing, all this was hidden from almost all readers, one reason why the pamphlet was read in the way that it was. The arch and mannered style of the opening section surely made readers wonder how to read the pamphlet. Was it actually considered a faithful account of a verified event by its unknown author, the mysterious, highly educated,

and perhaps thoroughly mischievous A.R.? Or was something else at stake? In the epistle to the reader, A.R., like his fellow pamphleteers – but at far greater length – draws attention to the truth/falsehood of what is to follow, in a notably and unusual self-conscious manner:

But passing by what's past let not our present truth blush for any former falsehood sake: The Countie is neere us, Sussex; The time present, August; The subject, a serpent; strange, yet now a neighbour to us; and it were more then impudence to forge a lie so neere home[...] (sigs A2<sup>r-v</sup>)

Perhaps the key word is “impudence,” which would appear to resonate more significantly than the ostensible references to truth and falsehood, which draw attention to the probability that we are about to witness something fake rather than real. The rhetoric here is surely as arch as anything in an extremely arch pamphlet and buries the supposedly factual nature of the case in a number of ironies.

As Jeremy Knight and Jason Semmens point out, it is likely that the source of the story is the un-named carrier, who brought the story to A.R.<sup>28</sup> Horsham had one carrier who was the principal link between that market town and the capital where A.R. probably lived, providing him with a convenient distance from events so he was able to write about the Sussex dragon from the perspective of one recounting the evidence without having to commit himself. Surely what we witness in this particular pamphlet is a self-conscious over-layering of stories and representations, which accounts for its unsettling and confusing tone and range of styles. We would appear to be reading an eyewitness account of the dragon, probably at one remove from its narrator, the carrier, which is then refigured by an urban sophisticate, A.R., who has produced a work that is as much about dragons and dragon lore as it is about the one sensational event. The truth or falsehood of the Horsham dragon becomes part of a game played out between author, publisher, and readers. Or rather, one that the pamphlet sidesteps and avoids, using the nature of the sensational news pamphlet to explore his own concerns.

Who was A.R.? He may, of course, have been John Trundle himself, cynically exploiting a story to make some money. Or he could have been a learned man in London laughing at the gullibility of his country cousins. A.R. = a rogue? However we read it, *A Discourse relating a strange and monstrous serpent* looks like a cony-catching pamphlet, one that fools and exploits its credulous readers, some of whom seem to have fallen for the trick. After all, Trundle did

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28 Knight and Semmens (eds), *Horsham's Dragon*, introduction, p. 14.

publish John Cooke's play, *Greene's Tu Quoque*, in the same year, a play about a spendthrift prodigal son, which looks back to the work of the most celebrated author of cony-catching pamphlets of the Elizabethan era.<sup>29</sup>

Did Trundle/A.R. ever imagine that the work would be taken at face value? Were they pushing a particular genre to its limit? Perhaps whoever wrote the pamphlet simply did not care what anyone believed. If so, this indifference to the truth may have been a cynical manoeuvre, or one that was deeply invested in morality and epistemological reflection, forcing readers to think about the nature of truth. However we read the pamphlet, it stands out as different from its counterparts and was clearly produced with an impressive amount of effort and sophistication, but to what end remains a little more obscure than one might wish. Clearly readers had an interest in dragons, perhaps inspired by Topsell's *Historie of Serpents*, from which the stories of Socrates viewing a dragon, the lady who slept with the affectionate dragon, and the moralistic dragon who separates the incestuous couple are taken. The most likely scenario is that 'A.R.' noted the interest in dragons and realized that he could exploit a story he obtained from a post carrier from Horsham to generate a tongue-in-cheek work for profit. The existence of only one surviving copy alongside a wealth of comment in other works would seem to indicate that the pamphlet was widely read and that copies were soon worn out. We can never be sure until more evidence appears, an extremely unlikely scenario. But, if my judgement is correct 'A.R.' would certainly have enjoyed the red herrings he produced for future generations to chase and would certainly have relished the bronze sculpture of the dragon that stands in Horsham Park.

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29 John Cooke, *Greenes Tu Quoque, or, The cittie gallant* (London, 1614), STC 5673.

## “Loyal Hind,” “The Prince of Thieves” *Crime Pamphlets and Royalist Propaganda in the 1650s*

Lena Liapi

At the battle of Worcester on 3 September 1651, Charles II's army was crushed and he was subsequently forced to flee to avoid capture. Shortly afterwards rumours started spreading that James Hind, highway robber and a soldier in the royalist army, had helped the king escape. When Hind was captured in London on 9 November 1651, the public interest in him turned him into a cause célèbre: his arrest was mentioned by six newsbooks in November and by more in the subsequent months.<sup>1</sup> In the next three months, Hind's story – how he turned from highway robbery to fighting for the king in Ireland and Scotland, and even meeting the king in person – as well as his behaviour during imprisonment, was narrated in 13 short pamphlets about him. All these addressed and sustained an interest in Hind's fate; he was tried in three different courts of law before finally being executed in Worcester in September 1652, almost a year after his arrest.<sup>2</sup>

In recent years there has been a lot of scholarly interest in the emergence of a public sphere in the mid-seventeenth century, in dialogue with Jürgen Habermas's definition of it as a slightly later, and decisively bourgeois, phenomenon.<sup>3</sup> The public sphere offered by a number of influential revisionist

1 *A Perfect Account*, 5–12 November 1651, p. 360; *Mercurius Politicus*, 6–12 November 1651, p. 1204; *Severall Proceedings in Parliament*, 6–13 November 1651, p. 1712; *Perfect Diurnall*, 10–17 November 1651, p. 1464; *The weekly Intelligencer*, 11–18 November, p. 346; *The faithfull Scout*, 7–14 November, p. 336. All newsbooks and pamphlets mentioned in this chapter have been accessed through *Early English Books Online (EEBO)*, <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>.

2 Barbara White, “Hind, James (*bap.* 1616, *d.* 1652)” in Lawrence Goldman (ed.), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/view/article/13340> (accessed 27 September 2012).

3 Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989); Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); David Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture: Printing, Petitions, and the Public Sphere in Early-Modern England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003).

accounts came into existence with the explosion of printed materials in the 1640s, or more accurately with the shift in print production from bigger volumes to smaller, cheaper items: usually pamphlets, newsbooks, and petitions.<sup>4</sup> Cheap print interacted with the shifting political climate of the Civil Wars and the Interregnum, commenting upon and influencing events, and thus becoming an essential part of the increasingly public dialogue about political issues. This opening up of political issues to a broader public was not an unprecedented phenomenon, but before the 1640s such appeals to a broader public had been limited to specific instances or "pamphlet moments."<sup>5</sup>

The renewed interest in cheap print as a factor in the formation of public opinion has yet to provoke a similar interest in crime pamphlets; thus, in *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture* – which treats various genres of cheap printed material with an emphasis on the 1640s – crime pamphlets are referred to, but not analysed as a distinct category.<sup>6</sup> This is probably due to a residual unease about the appropriate characterization of crime pamphlets, whose contents occupy an uneasy ground between news pamphlets, chapbooks, and romances. Due to their combination of stereotyped stories and topical references, and their status as commercial products that cash in on sensational events, they are viewed by most scholars as heavily fictionalized accounts of urban depravity or highway derring-do.<sup>7</sup> Even though there have been good analyses of the propagandist use of crime pamphlets in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries, either by the state or particular interest groups, the 1640s and 50s lack any similar treatment.<sup>8</sup> Despite the proliferating interest in pamphlets, petitions, and newsbooks, and their potential to engage with

4 Joad Raymond, "The Development of the Book Trade in Britain" in Joad Raymond (ed.), *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture: Volume One: Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 59–75.

5 Jason Peacey, "Pamphlets" in *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture*, p. 459; Peter Lake and Steven C.A. Pincus, "Rethinking the public sphere in early modern England" in Peter Lake and Steven C.A. Pincus (eds.) *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 1–30.

6 Raymond (ed.), *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture*.

7 Linda Woodbridge, "Jest Books, the Literature of Roguery, and the Vagrant Poor in Renaissance England," *English Literary Renaissance*, 33 (2003), pp. 201–210; Steve Mentz, "Magic Books: Cony-Catching and the Romance of Early Modern London" in Craig Dionne and Steve Mentz (eds.), *Rogues and Early Modern English Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), pp. 240–258.

8 James Sharpe, "'Last Dying Speeches': Religion, Ideology and Public Execution in Seventeenth-Century England," *Past & Present*, 107 (1985), pp. 144–167; Peter Lake, "Puritanism, Arminianism and a Shropshire Axe Murder," *Midland History*, 15 (1990), pp. 37–64.

a varied readership and propagate particular viewpoints in this period, crime pamphlets are not included in such analyses.

I would like to suggest that it is more useful to avoid the oppositions of fact and fiction when dealing with crime pamphlets, and to focus instead on their function. In this chapter I analyse the mentions of Hind in newsbooks of the period, in order to show that Hind's fame at the time of his arrest was so widespread as to provide an extraordinary opportunity to transform him into a symbol of the power either of the state or the Royalist cause. By looking at all publications relating to Hind, I additionally show that the state's apparent unwillingness to exploit Hind's arrest, removing him from London and not using his capture and execution as an instrument of its propaganda, left Hind's case open to appropriation by anti-Commonwealth publishers, especially George Horton, whose advertisement of Hind's Royalist feelings was crucial. By comparing Horton's pamphlets with the other accounts of Hind and his infamous activities, I illustrate that other pamphleteers avoided explicit mentions of Hind's Royalism, instead focusing more on his robberies, whereas Horton actively promoted this aspect of Hind's persona and politics.

### James Hind: Between Fact and Fiction

James Hind's most important achievement was that he managed to stay "on the stage of popularity" for longer than most highwaymen.<sup>9</sup> Even though we have no clear record of his actions before 1650, he apparently practised highway robbery in the 1640s: according to *The declaration of Captain James Hind* (1651), Hind claimed that he had stopped his robberies by 1649.<sup>10</sup> As we will see, he was particularly famous and his reputation was enhanced by rumours that he had been in the king's army and that he had helped Charles II to escape after the rout in Worcester. Hind was arrested in November 1651 in London, but was not executed until September 1652, after going through three different courts of law successively, in London, Reading, and Worcester.<sup>11</sup>

9 *A Perfect Account* (1652), p. 496.

10 Anonymous, *The declaration of Captain James Hind* (1651), p. 2.

11 There are few mentions of Hind's death, unlike his life and imprisonment. One pamphlet, on the last page, mentions that Hind was "carried to Worcester and there drawn, hang'd and quarter'd, on Friday Sep. 24 1652," but does not give any further details about his death: Anonymous, *No jest like a true jest being a compendious record of the merry life and mad exploits of Capt James Hind the great robber of England* (1657), sig. B4<sup>v</sup>. There was a more detailed description of his death in *A Perfect Account*, 22–29 September 1652, p. 728.

Most scholarly treatments of Hind tend to revolve around the dichotomy of fact and fiction: Hind is regarded as a real person who was turned into a fictionalized character in chapbooks circulating in the 1650s. According to such accounts, these publications aimed to attract a 'popular' audience by appealing to their secret wishes (a fantasy of living a life of luxury without working) or their conservative instincts and pro-Royalist sentiments. This explains the emphasis on myth-making, either in the sense that Hind was the archetype of the 'gentleman robber', a poor man who rose in society by highway robbery,<sup>12</sup> or as an expression of popular conservative feelings against the Commonwealth. Hind is described as "a Robin Hood figure, a patriot hero, whose exploits were a gesture of merry resistance to the Commonwealth," or, "the common man's hero" against Parliament.<sup>13</sup> This is done by emphasizing the generic elements in the stories circulating about him, which were similar in style to earlier pamphlets about rogues, were depersonalized, and often fictitious.<sup>14</sup> Viewing Hind from this angle prompted Lincoln B. Faller to argue that, "Hind was translated [...] into a world bearing only the most adventitious relation to the real world of the reader's experience."<sup>15</sup>

Running parallel to this interpretation is the assumption that the 'real' person re-emerges in the printed accounts of Hind's conduct during imprisonment: thus, those pamphlets that supposedly recorded his words and actions are treated as objective reportage. Scholars seem to take at face value George Horton's statement in *The declaration of Captain James Hind* (1651) that there have been various relations about the proceedings of Hind "fraught with impertinent stories, and new-invented fictions" and that Hind requested Horton to publish his true declaration.<sup>16</sup> As a consequence, there is a tendency to accept Hind's words, as recorded in Horton's pamphlets, as true, and to

12 Gillian Spraggs, *Outlaws and Highwaymen: The Cult of the Robber in England from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century* (London: Pimlico, 2001), p. 172.

13 Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640–1660* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 49; Jerome Friedman, *Miracles and the Pulp Press during the English Revolution: The Battle of the Frogs and Fairford's Flies* (London: UCL Press, 1993), p. 204.

14 Lincoln B. Faller, *Turned to Account: The Forms and Functions of Criminal Biography in Late Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Spraggs, *Outlaws and Highwaymen*, pp. 163–179; J.A. Sharpe, *Dick Turpin: The Myth of the English Highwayman* (London: Profile Books, 2004), pp. 49–55; Lois Potter, *Secret rites and Secret Writing: Royalist Literature, 1641–1660* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 103.

15 Faller, *Turned to Account*, pp. 123, 168.

16 Anonymous, *The declaration of Captain James Hind*, p. 1.

position Hind's Royalist sentiments, and statements in favour of the king as an attempt to justify his robberies. Faller claims that in the earlier publications about Hind, he was portrayed as a thief, until he "recast himself with the help of a certain Horton" as a patriot and a soldier, while Jerome de Groot considers Hind's royalist words as an example of "how marginalized, scandalous characters mitigated their social isolation by cleaving to a cause."<sup>17</sup>

Because Hind's depicted Royalism is viewed as either characteristic of the genre of the highwayman pamphlet, or as a mechanism allowing Hind to justify his actions, these treatments tend to overlook the potential for Royalist propaganda in this genre of cheap printed material. Royalist propaganda in cheap print form in the 1650s has been for the most part ignored by scholars working on Royalism due to a tendency to focus on major political figures on the Royalist side: David Underdown's work on *Royalist Conspiracy in England* concentrated on the part played by exiled members of the gentry or nobility, whereas Jason Peacey's analysis of propaganda from 1640–1660 defined the term narrowly, as "polemical works which appeared with the connivance of those political figures whose interests were best served by the existence of such books, tracts and pamphlets,"<sup>18</sup> thus assuming a very top-down view of how propaganda was created and disseminated. Even more dismissively, Jerome de Groot suggested that Royalist writers aimed for a closed debate because they did not want to acknowledge, or appeal to, a popular audience, something similar to Lois Potter's statement that Royalist style was intentionally inaccessible to "the vulgar."<sup>19</sup> The only notable exception to this general trend is an interest in Royalist newsbooks and especially *The Man in the Moon*.<sup>20</sup> It is however possible through the case study of the genre of crime pamphlets – typified in the example of Hind – to take a more nuanced and flexible view of the sites and operations of propaganda and political views, within a rich variety of literary and historical forms.

17 Faller, *Turned to Account*, p. 10; Jerome de Groot, *Royalist Identities* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 212–214. See also Spraggs, *Outlaws and Highwaymen*, p. 175.

18 David Underdown, *Royalist Conspiracy in England 1649–1660* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960); Jason Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers: Propaganda During the English Civil Wars and Interregnum* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

19 De Groot, *Royalist Identities*, pp. 60, 62, 74; Potter, *Secret Rites and Secret Writing*, p. 209.

20 Jason McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England* (Woodbridge and Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2007); David Underdown, *A Freeborn People: Politics and the Nation in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 98.



## Fame and Newsbook Reporting

The great public interest in Hind's arrest was probably the result of mostly oral rumours circulating about him beforehand, in which he featured not only as a very active highwayman, but also as an important figure in the Royalist war effort. This can be glimpsed from some mentions of his name in newsbooks before and during his imprisonment. For example, *Mercurius Politicus* of December 1650 claimed that "Hind, the great Thief is come into Scotland, with 80 hors and doth much mischief," which suggested that Hind had horsemen under his command – something as unlikely as that he had helped Charles II escape.<sup>21</sup> This, however, did not stop rumours from spreading after Charles II's defeat at Worcester: in a pro-parliamentary pamphlet titled *The declaration of Major Gen. Massey* (1651), it was supposedly reported "by some of the prisoners taken" (after the battle), that Charles II left "with Scoutmaster Gen. *Hind*, the grand Thief of *England*."<sup>22</sup> *The Weekly Intelligencer* was more cautious when it reported that "Others will tell you, that Hind the famous Robber whom they call his Scout-master Generall, did provide him with a Bark at Pensey in Sussex," and commented on the untrustworthiness of the various rumours about Charles's escape ("in this contrariety and contradiction of Reports we know not where to ground").<sup>23</sup>

What is interesting in all these publications is that their authors did not feel obliged to explain who Hind was, and that they boldly ascribed a military position to him, even when they did so tongue-in-cheek. Along with two pamphlets that appeared just before he was arrested, *Hind's ramble* (1651) and *The Prince of Priggs revels* (1651), these are the only mentions of his name in extant printed material which predate his arrest. This could be a matter of survival, or alternatively could show that newsbooks editors and pamphleteers responded to rumours spread orally about the infamous highwayman.<sup>24</sup> *Hind's ramble's* title page promised information about how Hind "was the onely man that conveyed the Scotch King to London," but it was clearly meant as an advertising ploy, since the publication contained no actual information about the escape.<sup>25</sup>

21 *Mercurius Politicus*, 5–12 December 1650, p. 451.

22 Sir Edward Massey, *The declaration of Major Gen. Massey upon his death-bed at Leicester* (1651), p. 3. The information contained in this pamphlet lacks credibility: it falsely reported the death of Massey, and imaginatively how Charles II tried to escape (and his lack of success in rallying countrymen to his cause).

23 *The weekly intelligencer of the Common-wealth*, 30 September–7 October 1651, p. 308.

24 George Fidge, *Hind's ramble* (1651); J.S., *The Prince of Priggs revels* (1651).

25 Fidge, *Hind's ramble*, p. 41.

*Hind's arrest* on 9 November 1651 was followed by a flurry of publications about him: he was mentioned in six of the seven newsbooks of the period, usually described in terms of his fame, such as "the infamous High way man," "the eminent [*sic*] High-way Robber," "the notorious Robber."<sup>26</sup> According to *A Perfect Account*, when Hind was apprehended:

he denied that he was such a man, but being so well known that there was not any likelihood that plea should hold to stand him in any stead, when it could not procure his present escape, being brought before a Magistrate and examined, he hath confessed that his name is Hinde, and that he is the man that hath committed many Robberies.<sup>27</sup>

In the same period, four pamphlets about him were published, catering for the apparent interest in news about Hind.<sup>28</sup>

In general, the newsbooks about Hind focused on his robberies; his service in the King's army was only mentioned because the question of whether Hind had indeed helped Charles II to escape was another popular preoccupation with his story. This is why the last paragraph of November's *A Perfect Account* (which sketched out the contents of the newsbook) mentioned that it contained information about "how he was instrumental in conveying away the Scots King from London," even though in the main body of the text the editor acknowledged that:

It is *said*, that he denies that he was in Armes at Worcester against the Parliament, yet it is *thought* that he was instrumentall in conveying away the Scots King and Wilmot.<sup>29</sup>

Hind's imprisonment and subsequent execution could have been an opportunity for the state to advertise its power, but does not seem to have been exploited by Parliament.<sup>30</sup> The state clearly wished to bury Hind in both a

26 *Severall Proceedings in Parliament*, 6–13 November 1651; *A perfect diurnall*, 10–17 November 1651; *The weekly Intelligencer*, 11–18 November 1651.

27 *A Perfect Account*, 5–12 November 1651.

28 Anonymous, *The true and perfect relation of the taking of Captain James Hind* (1651); Anonymous, *The declaration of Captain James Hind* (1651); Anonymous, *A second discovery of Hind's exploits* (1651), Anonymous, *The humble petition of James Hind* (1651).

29 *A Perfect Account*, 5–12 November 1651. Emphasis mine.

30 On states using executions as a way of advertising their power, see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), pp. 65–67; Sharpe, "Last Dying Speeches."

literal and figurative sense: even though Hind was initially charged with treason and imprisoned in Newgate, there was no indictment drawn against him, but he was sent to Reading to be tried for manslaughter. Only when this did not suffice to have him executed was he finally tried for high treason.<sup>31</sup> The state pursued Hind's execution with a bloodthirstiness that seems surprising for the prosecution of a highwayman, something that was sarcastically noted in *A Perfect Account*:

Capt. Hind the great robber having continued two Sessions in Newgate, and no indictment preferred against him there, is the next Circuit to go from Sizes to Sizes, in those Countries where it is thought he hath committed his chiefest pranks, where any one that he hath wronged may prefer their indictments against him.<sup>32</sup>

This passage suggests that at least some commentators thought that the state was going out of its way to make an accusation stick.

According to Barbara White, Hind's removal from London and his trial for manslaughter were prompted by the authorities' reluctance to turn him into a martyr for the Royalist cause,<sup>33</sup> and this assumption is substantiated by the cautious stance most newsbooks kept towards Hind. *Mercurius Politicus* – the main instrument of Commonwealth propaganda – mentioned Hind only once, when he was arrested, explaining that the only reason news about Hind was included was "because many odd reports have run up and down touching Hind, the notorious High-way-man, and his perambulation."<sup>34</sup> *The Weekly Intelligencer* chose another approach, attempting to use Royalist statements issued by Hind when he was led to Newgate, against the king's cause:

Although he was sufficiently laden with Irons before, and had money little enough about him, and look't but heavy at his entrance, yet immediately after he cheered up, and in full bowles began his healths to the King [...]. However, amongst those numbers that thronged in to see him, there was not one would pledg him on that Account, his fellow prisoners only

31 State Papers 10 November 1651, 15 December 1651, 18 February 1652, 21 July 1652 in Mary Anne Everett Green (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Interregnum, 1651–1652*, British History Online (<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/source.aspx?pubid=647>).

32 *A Perfect Account*, 15 January 1652, p. 430.

33 Barbara White, "Hind, James (bap. 1616, d. 1652)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

34 *Mercurius Politicus*, 6–12 November 1651, p. 1204.

excepted, who were all of his Complexion: And when they are to suffer, the world is to take notice that they dye all true Subjects to the Scots King. *A great honour for him*[...] <sup>35</sup>

The last snide remark about the dubious “honour” of having a notorious robber as a follower (along with the characteristic stereotypes of Royalist health-drinking) shows how Hind could be used as Commonwealth propaganda, but no other newsbook editor followed Collins’s (the editor of *The Weekly Intelligencer*) example. Hind’s name kept cropping up in newsbooks until his execution in September 1652, but he was merely mentioned as a robber, and the reports consisted of the details of his trials.<sup>36</sup> The only exception, apart from the anti-establishment newsbook *The Faithfull Scout* (explored below), was *A Perfect Account* from September 1652: this recorded Hind’s dying speech where Hind’s Royalism was expressed clearly but with no editorial comment.<sup>37</sup> Had the regime wished to turn Hind’s trial into a showcase of either its power or the pitiful status of the king’s followers, there would have been newsbooks or other publications following such a line. But the establishment’s silence on Hind’s case left him open to appropriation by those who wanted to criticize the Commonwealth.

### Horton’s Hind: Royalism and Popular Writing

This opportunity for appropriation was seized upon by the bookseller George Horton, who actively promoted and advertised Hind’s subscription to the Royalist cause in order to criticize the Cromwellian government. Horton was a prolific publisher in the 1650s, mostly of newsbooks and other news pamphlets. His, however, was no disinterested trade: in 1653 he was one of the booksellers arrested for printing material the authorities found unpalatable.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *The weekly Intelligencer*, 11–18 November 1651, p. 346.

<sup>36</sup> *A Perfect Account*, 15–22 January 1652, p. 430; *The Faithfull Scout*, 9–16 January 1652, pp. 404–405; *A Perfect Account*, 21–28 January 1652, p. 448; *The Faithfull Scout*, 16–23 January 1652, p. 414; *The French Intelligencer*, 20–27 January 1652, p. 70; *The Faithfull Scout*, 6–13 February 1652, p. 438; *A Perfect Account*, 3 March 1652, p. 496; *A Perfect Account*, 25 August–1 September 1652, p. 696; *The Faithfull Scout*, 27 August–3 September 1652, p. 665; *A Perfect Account*, 22–29 September 1652, p. 728.

<sup>37</sup> *A Perfect Account*, 22–29 September 1652, p. 728.

<sup>38</sup> “Warrants of the Council of State (C.O.S.), General of the Fleet, &c.: 1653 Oct 21; To apprehend Mrs. Clowes, Geo. Horton, John Perkins, Isaac Grey, and Thos. Spring, and bring them before Council to answer objections” in *Calendar of State Papers Domestic*:

His earlier publications might have been slightly more circumspect, but were equally subversive: Horton was associated with Daniel Border, a newsbook editor who in 1651 and 1652 was becoming a nuisance for the Commonwealth with the newsbooks he was editing – *The Faithfull Scout*, *The French Intelligencer*, and *The French Occurrences* (the *Intelligencer's* successor) – to the extent that Border was questioned twice in 1652 about offensive articles and probably was briefly imprisoned.<sup>39</sup>

All three newsbooks had Royalist sympathies and maintained a critique of the establishment by printing, on several occasions, the slogan "GOD SAVE THE KING" in capitals (and excusing themselves by alleging that the phrase came from France); by including references to prophecies which had anti-Commonwealth overtones; and by depicting Lilburne, the leader of the Levellers, in a positive light.<sup>40</sup> The latter could be a radical or a Royalist move, since it was not unusual for Royalist publications – especially newsbooks – to praise Lilburne when it suited them, in order to criticize the establishment.<sup>41</sup>

Horton published *The French Occurrences* and some of *The Faithfull Scout's* issues, and his own publications in the same period echoed their pre-occupations. In the three months that followed Hind's arrest – during which time most of the pamphlets about him circulated – the rest of Horton's published material included news about the King of Scots (including some of his declarations and letters from other European royal personages), Leveller tracts, and other texts relating to Lilburne.<sup>42</sup> In these publications, Horton tried to keep the King's name continuously in the spotlight by showing the support Charles received from significant political figures and emphasizing the opposition to the Commonwealth by radicals. It is not clear whether Horton was a Royalist or a radical bookseller: he did publish *The Faithful Post*, edited by Border, which was favourable to sectaries and the Baptists in

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1653–1654 (1879), pp. 427–449. In 1649 an "Act against Scandalous and Unlicensed Books" was passed in order to control the press, see Raymond, "News" in *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture*, p. 390.

39 Joseph Frank, *The Beginnings of the English Newspaper, 1620–1660* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 227–228.

40 Frank, *The Beginnings of the English Newspaper*, p. 222. Prophecies could be used as portents of God's displeasure against Parliament, see Underdown, *Royalist Conspiracy in England*, p. 107.

41 McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England*, p. 64.

42 [G.K. Fortescue (ed.),] *Catalogue of the Pamphlets, Books, Newspapers, and Manuscripts Relating to the Civil War, the Commonwealth, and Restoration, Collected by George Thomason, 1640–1661*, 2 vols (London: the Trustees, 1908), vol. 1.

particular.<sup>43</sup> It is very difficult to reconstruct a bookseller's political allegiance with any degree of certainty,<sup>44</sup> but his publications were clearly political, and in this period were staunchly anti-Commonwealth. This last could support both interpretations, since many radicals, and especially the Levellers, felt as bitter towards the Commonwealth in the 1650s as the Royalists did.<sup>45</sup>

Regardless of his exact position, an examination of Hind's pamphlets that distinguishes between those printed by Horton and those by other booksellers, shows the extent to which Horton's were meant as anti-Commonwealth propaganda. Horton showed a great interest in Hind, publishing 6 out of the 13 pamphlets about him. None of these featured an author's name save for *We have brought our hogs to a fair market* (1652), which was penned by Horton, leaving open the possibility that he might have been the author of the others as well. By focusing more on Horton's role in the pamphlets we can see that Hind's Royalism was repeatedly brought to the fore by Horton and that Horton's reportage was anything but objective.

Where others focused on Hind's robberies and toned down his Royalism, Horton emphasized the latter. In *The true and perfect relation of the taking of Captain James Hind* (1651), published by Horton, his Royalism shines through in a detailed description about Hind's dialogue with the crowds visiting him in prison. When a gentleman from his hometown told him:

*Truly Countrey-man I am sorry to see you in this place, he answered That imprisonment was a comfort to him, in suffering for so good and just a Cause, as adhering to the KING.*<sup>46</sup>

The gentleman's refusal to drink a health to "*my Master the King*":

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43 L.F. Brown, *Political Activities of the Baptists & Fifth Monarchy Men during the Interregnum* (Washington: American Historical Association, 1913), p. 237. *The Faithful Post* circulated from March 1653 to June 1655.

44 On attempts to explain the importance of publishers in the production of ideologically inflected texts and to understand the ideological commitment and specialization of particular publishers, see Zachary Lesser, *Renaissance Drama and the Politics of Publication: Readings in the English Book Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 28–55; Peter McCullough, "Print, Publication, and Religious Politics in Caroline England," *The Historical Journal*, 51 (2008), pp. 285–313.

45 Underdown, *A Freeborn People*, p. 103.

46 Anonymous, *The true and perfect relation of the taking of Captain James Hind* (1651), p. 3.

moved Hind to passion, who said; the Devill take all Traytors: Had I a thousand lives, and at liberty, I would adventure them all for King Charles.<sup>47</sup>

Hind went on to say:

I value it not a three pence, to lose my life in so good a cause; and if it was to do again, I should do the like.<sup>48</sup>

This closely resembles *The Weekly Intelligencer's* issue mentioned earlier; in this version however, Hind's statements in support of the King are quoted at length and given prominence, thus making them the focal point of this account. This emphasis on the pro-monarchical character of Hind's declaration is underlined typographically by using capital letters for the King's name.<sup>49</sup> Hind protests that he only robbed rich men, and especially greedy lawyers whose fees were extracted from poor cottagers, a clear use of the Robin Hood stereotype.<sup>50</sup> In addition, the reaction of the audience is described in completely different terms: when Hind is reported to have said that he wished "that thing were as little used in England amongst Lawyers, as the eating of Swines-flesh was amongst the Jews," the pamphlet reports that "this expression caused much laughter, and many such witty Gingles would be often put forth."<sup>51</sup> This description of the shared laughter between the highwayman and his audience at the expense of his victims was clearly meant to emphasize that Hind's audience was on his side, sharing his criticism against lawyers and tacitly justifying his actions. Barbara White views *The true and perfect relation* as "a journalist's first-hand account of his words on this occasion," which I think misses the gloss put over Hind's words by Horton.<sup>52</sup>

47 Anonymous, *The true and perfect relation of the taking of Captain James Hind*, p. 3.

48 Ibid. p. 6.

49 This was not a convention since in many other pamphlets of the same period, the name of the King was not capitalized. However, in Horton's pamphlets, mentions of the King are capitalized, which may indicate that Horton was attempting to make the King's presence more obvious typographically.

50 See also Sharpe, *Dick Turpin*, p. 52.

51 Anonymous, *The true and perfect relation of the taking of Captain James Hind*, pp. 5–6.

52 Barbara White, "Hind, James (bap. 1616, d. 1652)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. White's comparison with *The Weekly Intelligencer* "confirms that these pamphlets were at most elaborating rather than imposing on Hind a stance of defiant Royalism."

Another pro-Royalist publication, *The trial of Captain James Hind* (1651), was probably published by Horton as well, though no publishing agent is identified on the title-page. This followed the same style of 'journalistic' account characteristic of Horton's publications, and it used the same phraseology as *The true and perfect relation*. When describing Hind's words after his trial, it commented that his "expression caused much laughture," which supports the assumption that it was published by Horton. In addition, it highlighted Hind's Royalism by appending the comment "this is observable," to Hind's claim at the beginning of the trial: "my name is honest and loyal James Hind."<sup>53</sup> The author also inserted a personal comment in favour of Hind, saying, "truly I am of this Opinion, that the mercy of the Parliament will extend the severity of Justice."<sup>54</sup>

The attempt to emphasize Hind's connection to the Royalist cause was continued in *The humble petition of James Hind* (1651), also published by Horton. Despite the misleading title, Hind's petition-asking for more humane conditions during his imprisonment-covers just a page, while five pages are devoted to an account of the execution of 31 Royalists in Ireland. Even though Hind's petition is neutral, the report of the long dying speech by the Bishop of Clonwell in favour of the King had an obvious propaganda value, since he claimed that God willed "the establishing of the Royal Posterity in their just Rights and Liberties." The assumption that this was not neutral reportage is further justified by the pamphlet's attempt to cast the Bishop as a martyr, by stating that he was "the first that tasted of the Cup" (of martyrdom).<sup>55</sup>

Where Horton really brought the message home, however, is in the pamphlet *We have brought our hogs to a fair market* (1652), which was not only published but was written by Horton.<sup>56</sup> The title page advertised that it contained Hind's orders "to all his royal gang," as well as "the appearing of a strange vision on Munday morning last, with a crown upon his head." It is interesting that highwaymen would be described as a "royal gang," but apparently Horton was trying to exculpate them, or at least to show that they could direct their

53 Anonymous, *The trial of Captain James Hind* (1651), pp. 5, 8. According to McElligott, "loyalist" was the usual term Royalists used for themselves, McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England*, p. 5.

54 Anonymous, *The trial of Captain James Hind* (1651), p. 5.

55 James Hind, *The humble petition of James Hind* (1651), p. 5. (This was not necessarily written by Hind.)

56 G.H., *We have brought our hogs to a fair market: or, Strange newes from New-Gate; being a most pleasant and historical narrative, of Captain James Hind* (1652).



activities towards deserving targets. Hind admonishes them to refrain from robbing anyone apart "from the Caterpillars of the Times, viz. Long-gown men, Committee-men, Excize-men, Sequestrators, and other Sacrilegious persons." Using the term "caterpillars" – which was used for those who preyed upon society (quite often robbers) – to characterize professionals who were supposed to be pillars of the government, is a deliberate use of inversion with direct reference to the tradition of Robin Hood. It is meant to discredit the regime by identifying its bureaucrats as the 'real' robbers, while highwaymen are presented as enforcers of moral justice.<sup>57</sup>

Even more seditious was the description of a vision Hind had while in prison, which follows closely the pattern of political prophecies popular in this period. The pamphlet alleges that whilst Hind was in prison:

there appeared a Vision, in the likeness and portraicture [*sic*] of the late King Charles, with a Crown upon his head, saying, *Repent, repent, and the King of Kings will have mercy on a Thief*.<sup>58</sup>

Such an overt play upon the idea that the King was God's agent in the world, even after his execution, was as clear a piece of propaganda as could be used in such a printed work. The effect was further accentuated by the inclusion on the same page of a small image of the King, and on the next page, images of Hind and of a lion, which was the symbol of the Stuarts (see Figs 5.1 and 5.2 respectively). Parts of this pamphlet (and, importantly, both of the passages commented upon here) were reprinted in two consecutive issues of *The Faithfull Scout*, the newsbook edited by Border, who apparently followed Horton's initiative in using Hind as a way to criticize the Commonwealth.<sup>59</sup>

Contrary to Horton's pamphlets, the other cheap texts that appeared after Hind's arrest focused on his status as a robber, totally ignoring his Royalism. Pamphlets such as *A second discovery of Hind's exploits* (1651), *The last will and testament of James Hynd* (1651), *A pill to purge melancholy* (1652), *The English Gusman* (1652), and *Wit for mony* (1652), narrated generic stories of deceit and robbery, presenting Hind in a long tradition of rogue heroes. The only hints of Hind's Royalism were the mention of his travels to Ireland and Holland,

57 About inversion and the "alternative popular vocabulary," see Underdown, *A Freeborn People*, p. 93.

58 H., *We have brought our hogs to a fair market*, p. 5.

59 *The Faithfull Scout*, 9–16 January 1652, pp. 404–405; 16–23 January 1652, pp. 414–415. Some of *The Faithfull Scout*'s issues were printed for George Horton (see for example the 27 August to 3 September issue).

(5)

morning very early *Hind* calls for his horse, to be gon; being now mounted, he takes leave of the Gentlemen; but as he rode along *Hatfield*, at the Towns-end, an old woman asked an alms of him, his horse was so charitable minded that he presently staid, and would go no further; Sir, said the old woman, *I have something to say to you, and then you shall be gon*; *Hind* not liking her countenance, pul'd out 5 s. and gave her, thinking she would but like a *Gipsee*, tell his fortune: said, *Good woman I am in hast*: Sir, said she, *I have staid all this morning to speak to you*; and would you have me lose my labour: speak your mind, said *Hind*. Then the old woman spake as followeth:

*Captain Hind,*

**Y**ou ride and go in many dangers; wherefore by my poor skill, I have studied a way to preserve you for the space of three years: but that time being past, you are no more then an ordinary man, and a mischance may fall on you, as well as another: but if you be in *England*, come to me, and I will renew the Vertue of this Charm again; In saying these words, she pul'd out of her bosom a box like a Sun-Diall, and gave it *Cap Hind*, saying; *When you are in any distress, open this, and which way you see the Star turn (being set at the end of a needle like a Diall) ride or go that way, and you shall escape all dangers*: So she switch'd him with a white Rod that was in her hand, strook the horse on the buttocks, and bid him farewell. The horse leaped forward with such courage, that *Hind* had much ado to turn him to give her thanks. The time of this Charm was expired in the year 1649.

Since which time, many strange Visions have appeared unto him, but especially since he came to Newgate; where, on Munday last in the morning, falling into a Dream, there appeared a Vision, in the likeness and portraiture of the late King *Charles*, with a Crown upon his head, saying, *Repent, repent, and the King of Kings will have mercy on a Thief*.



The next morning (being *Tuesday*) he told one of the Keepers, That he had heard of many men going to Heaven in a string; but he had bin there in a dream, where he saw his Master the King, the noble Lord *Capel*; but could not see Duke *Hamilton*. The Keeper reply'd, Mr *Hind*, *was you mad to leave such a glorious place, for to come again to this dark Dungeon*: Truly, I am afraid you will scarce ever come there again; and so they parted with a jest.

*Haw*

FIGURE 5.1 We have brought our hogs to a fair market: or, Strange newes from New-Gate (1652), part of p. 5, showing the image of Charles I. This item is reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

set about the said Inn, which he perceiving, came into the Gallery, and inquired the cause thereof; answer was returned, That they came to make search for one who had committed a great Robbery, and that there was great suspicion that he was the man. Who I, said *Hind*; No, I will make it manifest to the contrary; standing in this posture:



Gentlemen, I am a man sent to do Wonders; and many Visions have appear'd; and sundry voices have I heard, saying, *O thou great and mighty Lyon, thou art decreed to range the Countries to work and manifest to the people strange Wonders*: At which instant, a Rampant Lyon appeared visible, but immediatly vanished; to the great admiration of the spectators; who peaceably departed to their severall Habitations, to tell the strangeness of this Wonder.



FIGURE 5.2 We have brought our hogs to a fair market: or, Strange newes from New-Gate (1652), p. 7, showing images of James Hind and a lion. This item is reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

and occasional references to his service in the army, but not with the same pro-Royalist tenacity Horton's pamphlets show. For example, *The English Gusman* (1652) included passages from Horton's pamphlets, such as *The true and perfect relation of the taking of Captain James Hind* (1651) and *The humble petition of James Hind* (1651), but at the same time had no problem with cynically stating that Hind's reason for getting a post with the Royalist army was so he could continue robbing: "he got many mad lads together and did many robberies with authority."<sup>60</sup>

The tendency to trivialize Hind and obscure his Royalism can be more explicitly found in *A second discovery of Hind's exploits* (1651). In this pamphlet, various robberies and cozenages committed by Hind are described in almost every corner of the land, but the pamphlet tells us nothing about his political affiliation. One of the stories is even titled "how Hinde [...] robbed a Countryman in Glocestershire, by laughing." In addition, the woodcut that accompanied this publication showed a Cavalier being assaulted by a Roundhead, the Cavalier being in a very compromised position, with a shepherd's crook around his neck. This was clearly a recycled image from an earlier anti-Cavalier satire, and its inclusion in a pamphlet about the Royalist Hind cannot have been accidental: it subverted the image of Hind as an active and (to a certain degree) successful robber.<sup>61</sup> Even though Horton's pamphlets contained similar stories, the omission of almost any trace of Royalism in the other pamphlets makes Horton's insistence on Hind's pro-monarchical attitude even more glaring.

Despite the fact that other booksellers did not follow Horton's example in their treatment of Hind, other robbers were used to create pieces of Royalist propaganda, albeit in less obvious ways. In January 1652, a pamphlet titled *Hinds elder brother* was published, recounting the adventures of another Royalist highwayman (the pamphlet gives him the title of "Major"), Thomas Knowls. This short pamphlet was intended to cash in on Hind's notoriety, but showed a similar Royalist inclination by including a story about "How Knowls robbed the Scotch Commissioners." The poem that concludes this story follows the usual pattern of the trickster tricked, attributing the initial fraud to the Scots Commissioners:

thus witty Knowls did borrow plate  
of those which cozen'd King and State.

<sup>60</sup> Fidge, *The English Gusman* (1652), p. 35.

<sup>61</sup> *A second discovery of Hind's exploits* (1651). I am grateful to Dr Helen Pierce for her help with this woodcut.

The one they sold, the others thought to cheat,  
but now repent, since they are soundly beat.<sup>62</sup>

In this poem, the Scots Commissioners are portrayed as the greater thieves, who tricked the King and State, while Knowls is depicted, not as a thief, but as a corrector of injustice. The same passage was appended in *The Faithfull Scout's* issue, used there more clearly as Royalist propaganda. Border prefaced the story by commenting that "Major Knowls" was fighting against Moss-troopers because he:

bears an inveterate hatred against the Jockies, and is resolved to pay them home for their late perfidiousnesse and trechery to their Sovereign Lord the King.<sup>63</sup>

Even more obvious was the pamphlet *The knight errant*, published in March 1652, with the story of the tricks and robberies of William Hart. The publisher of this pamphlet was E.C., who was more than likely Edward Crouch (no other publisher in this period has the same initials), the Royalist printer who, together with John Crouch, published various newsbooks (including the *Man in the Moon*).<sup>64</sup> The author attacks the Scottish Stool of Repentance, claiming that by punishing small sins severely the Scots created actual criminals – Hart resorted to robbery after leaving Scotland in order to escape persecution for fornication. In addition, the pamphlet describes how Hart was among the first to welcome Charles II in Worcester:

comes the Scotch King with his tarpallians to town,<sup>65</sup> and then hey boyes, who but our Knight proclaims him at the market Cross and

62 *Hinds elder brother, or the master thief discovered. Being a notable pithy Relation of the life of Major Thomas Knowls his many Exploits Escapes, and witty Robberies* (1652). Knowls was a real robber as well: in *A Perfect Account* (3 March 1652): "There was apprehended in London, and carried to Newgate (the latter end of the last week) one Knowls, a notorious thief charged to be one of those that robbed the Speaker, the Charter house, and did many other great robberies," p. 496.

63 The Scots were apparently called "Jockies," see for example the ballad *Jockies Lamentation, VVhose seditious work was the loss of his Country, and his KIRK* (1657).

64 J.B., *The knight errant: being a witty, notable and true relation of the strange adventures of Sir William Hart now prisoner in the tower: his severall exploits, cheats, and most witty tricks by him acted ever since his first beeing untill his proclaiming the Scotch king at Worcester, in August last. Written by J.B. Gent* (1652).

65 It is not clear what "tarpallians" means. The word "tarpaulian" denoted a marine or sailor in this period: "† tarpaulian, n. and adj." *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

the next day to Court as Bravely harnessed as one of the Goulden fellowes?<sup>66</sup>

The familiar tone and the mention of “our” knight seem to suggest that the author expected the readers to side with him in favour of the King.

In conclusion, crime pamphlets appearing in the charged political atmosphere of the 1650s could be easily appropriated by both contesting sides to serve as propaganda for their respective causes. James Hind, whose name was so recognized and who had been the focus of widespread speculation, presented an ideal vehicle for propaganda purposes. The authorities however did not choose to make an example out of his trial and punishment, but on the contrary preferred to keep him away from the public eye. Most pamphleteers and newsbook editors, even if they did not completely ignore such a popular subject, carefully avoided mentions of Hind’s Royalism, which was the crux of the problem.

This, on the other hand, left the field open to opponents of the Commonwealth, most notably George Horton, who exploited Hind’s fame in order to propagate the Royalist cause. Using the stereotype of the highwayman and the claim to provide reportage on current affairs, Horton’s pamphlets cleverly appropriated older forms of writing about criminals in order to make a political statement more effective, while appearing less harmful. Thus, these pamphlets attempted to advertise Hind’s Royalism and connect it to a popular idiom of resistance, in order to influence public opinion in the King’s favour. The choice to turn a highwayman into an almost emblematic figure of Royalism was risky, since it could bring the accusation that only people of that ilk would support the King. We cannot be certain how the audience responded to this attempt to valorize the King and discredit the establishment. Judging by the popularity of the pamphlets, as well as the crowds that gathered to see the notorious highwayman and hear what he had to say at his execution, we can assume that the gamble was not unreasonable.

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<http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/view/Entry/197879?rskey=RmmHgM&result=7> (accessed 12 November 2013). Here it is probably used to denote the followers of Charles II.

66 B., *The knight errant*, sig. B4<sup>r</sup>.

## Intensive Ephemera

### *The Catholick Gamesters and the Visual Culture of News in Restoration London*

*Adam Morton*

When Roger L'Estrange looked at *The Catholick Gamesters* (Fig. 6.1) – a satirical print published in 1680 – all he saw was sedition:

The device call'd the *Catholique Gamesters*, is a *venemous Libel upon all the Orders of the Government*; and first upon the *King himself*, charging all the Pretened Miscarriages of State, in *Shew*, upon the Papists, but in *Truth* [...] upon his Majesty.<sup>1</sup>

L'Estrange – the Tory propagandist-in-chief whose *raison d'être* during the Succession Crisis was to nullify the effects of Whig media on the British public – drew a parallel between the Civil Wars and the attempts to exclude the Catholic James, Duke of York from the throne. During each, visceral anti-Catholicism was used to mask an attack on monarchy. His writings betray a persistent fear of the Restoration's rich media – newspapers, ballads, pamphlets – defrauding and deluding the populace and turning it against the Crown. But even amidst the sheer weight of that media, *The Gamesters*, as visual libel, stood out as particularly dangerous. Designed by the “Protestant joiner” Stephen College, *The Gamesters* was a complex allegory of the Popish Plot as a game of “Nine-pins” (skittles).<sup>2</sup> Exploring how something so farcical could be understood as seditious is vital in grasping graphic satire's power within news culture. Refuting charges of College's innocence following his execution for High Treason in 1681, L'Estrange collated evidence of his intention to overthrow the Crown. Even amidst trial proceedings, the critical evidence against College was his visual satires: “whosever *Defames* the Government at This rate, wishes it *Overturn'd*”.<sup>3</sup>

- 1 R. L'Estrange, *Notes upon Stephen College* (1681), p. 29. L'Estrange unpicked how the treasonable allegory accused the Crown, Bishops, Commons, and the courts of popery.
- 2 British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings, Satire 1077 [henceforth BM Sat]. College designed many prints agitating for Exclusion, including BM Sat 1083; BM Sat 1084; BM Sat 1087.
- 3 *The Raree Show* (BM Satires undescribed). See L'Estrange, *Notes*, pp. 9–11; *A Letter Concerning the tryal at Oxford of Stephen College* (1681); *The Speech and carriage of Stephen*





By mocking the Crown, College's "Learned" prints – "charged with the utmost Rudeness, Malice and Scurrility imaginable" – corroded the ties of respect binding society together, thus proving his lust for "designing" (plotting).<sup>4</sup> Visualisation heightened acidity. But in deeming *The Gamesters* "learned" – referring to its complex political allusions – L'Estrange also demonstrated its indebtedness to satire. It is argued that this was the nub of visual media's power. Effecting behaviour by affecting the emotions, satire's vehement presentation of vice was understood to repel/correct audiences into pursuing virtue – thus in *The Gamesters*, a visceral depiction of popery (vice) acted to inspire Parliament to pursue corrective constitutional reform (virtue) by excluding James from the succession. This capacity to inspire action terrified L'Estrange:

the Treason of [College's] Heart is laid as open in those Cuts [engravings], as his Tongue was at his Trial; with this single Difference, that one was only a wish, and the other an Overt Act, and a declared Resolution.<sup>5</sup>

One man's satire was another's sedition.

Recent studies signal a new interest in seventeenth-century visual media. However, in order to emphasize its importance as an object of study, scholars have characterized it as an aspect of news discourse, more readily accepted by historians as integral to political discourse. The visual is thus important by virtue of integration. For Kevin Sharpe, visual/material cultures were facets of the "image wars" through which authority was debated, essentially another avenue of the politics of contestation.<sup>6</sup> Helen Pierce similarly emphasized the integration of the visual, placing early seventeenth-century graphic satires within a web of ideological exchange spanning oral and textual cultures, and parasitic upon pamphlets, ballads, and other media for their motifs and images.<sup>7</sup>

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*College* (1681). Satires that College had designed were used as evidence against him at his trial, horrifying the judges and persistently understood as proof that he desired to overthrow the King. See T.B. Howell and T.J. Howell (eds), *Cobbett's Complete collection of state trials*, 34 vols (1809–1828), vol. 8, pp. 549–746.

4 On libel see Alastair Bellany, "A Poem upon the Archbishop's hearse': Puritanism, Libel and Sedition after the Hampton Court Conference," *Journal of British Studies*, 34 (1995), pp. 285–310.

5 L'Estrange, *Notes*, pp. 27–29.

6 Kevin Sharpe, *Image Wars; Promoting Kings and Commonwealths in England, 1603–1660* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

7 Helen Pierce, *Unseemly Pictures: Graphic Satire and Politics in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

Tim Harris integrated the visual as one strand within a torrent of media by which politics in Restoration London travelled out of doors;<sup>8</sup> and Mark Knights highlighted the increased sophistication with which visual media did so between the Succession Crisis (1678–1682) and the Sacheverell affair (1710). Two aspects of Knight's thesis are notable: (1) the increasingly dialogic nature of the visual (graphic satires began responding to one another); and (2) the playful transmutation of visual content across material culture, with images produced in prints reappearing on playing cards, badges, and tiles to a significant degree.<sup>9</sup> This heteroglossic media permitted the emergence of emotive visual shorthands to complex polemical concepts, paralleling the rise of slogans as a means of expressing political solidarity/affiliation.<sup>10</sup> Such scholarship extends post-revisionist accounts of popular politics which deem England's population to have been increasingly well-informed – the availability of news of every kind allowed people to engage with political realities and make informed judgements about them.<sup>11</sup>

Yet deeming visual media a tributary to the main news stream risks underestimating the specificity of its import: of masking, through integration, the pointedness of graphic satires' critique. The longer-term perspective is important. By the mid-eighteenth century, graphic satires had become increasingly referentially endogamous and were marketed by specialist vendors operating within a specific niche of the print marketplace.<sup>12</sup> L'Estrange's comments on College suggest that single-sheet satires performed equally specific roles in the earlier period, and that graphic satire possessed a heightened mocking power, rendering it a form of *action* as much as a vehicle for ideas. Discriminating between news as action and information is important, for satire had long been

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8 Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration until the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

9 Mark Knights, "Possessing the Visual: The Materiality of Visual Print Culture in Later Stuart Britain" in James Daybell and Peter Hinds (eds.), *Material Readings of Early Modern Culture: Texts and Social Practices, 1580–1730* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 85–122.

10 This continued into the nineteenth century. See Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 53–54; Marcus Wood, *Radical Satire and Print Culture* (Oxford: Calrendon Press, 1994), pp. 67, 76.

11 Alastair Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

12 Knights, "Possessing," pp. 88, 96; Diana Donald, *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); V.A.C. Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006).

defined by its social function. Understood since classical civilization as a visceral discourse with a moralistic intent, an attack on vice to police behaviour and correct or punish transgressors of accepted mores, satire was part art form and part ritual, a practice enacting specific types of virtuous behaviour in its audience (see below). *The Gamesters* was certainly conceived as a vehicle for action, and this chapter suggests that when understood as satires, rather than as another aspect of news, the true force of visual media within the public sphere is understood.

In the seventeenth century – where ‘opinion’ and ‘information’, ‘news’ and ‘commentary’ were not distinct categories – understanding discourse as action is vital to perceiving the impact of news.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, scholars have interpreted the representations of politics as inseparable from its ideas, showing that rhetoric did not merely project ideologies, but actively shaped them. As representation was indistinguishable from politics, so ideology was indistinguishable from information. Discourse actively persuaded rather than passively informed, widening participation in the public sphere by involving audiences in a form of political commentary.<sup>14</sup> For instance, considerable prior knowledge was required to comprehend broadside ballads. News performed a didactic function not by informing, but by providing (and attempting to persuade the reader/listener to acquiesce to) a “moral gloss or emotional response” upon widely known events.<sup>15</sup>

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- 13 J.L. Austin, *How To Do Things with Words* (2nd ed.: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975); John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). Brendan Dooley and Sabrina A. Baron (eds.), *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), introduction, pp. 1–2; Brendan Dooley, “News and doubt in Early Modern culture; or, are we having a public sphere yet?” in *ibid.*, pp. 279–287; Joad Raymond (ed.), *News Networks in Seventeenth Century Britain and Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), introduction, pp. 1–14.
  - 14 Kevin Sharpe, “Representations and negotiations: texts, images and authority in early modern England,” *Historical Journal*, 42 (1999), pp. 853–881; *id.*, “Celebrating a cultural turn: political culture and cultural politics in early modern England,” *Journal of Early Modern History*, 1 (1997), pp. 344–368; Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (eds.), *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); Mark Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation in later Stuart Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
  - 15 Angela McShane Jones, “*The Gazet in Metre; or the Rhiming Newsmonger*, The English Broadside Ballad as Intelligencer. A New Narrative” in Joop W. Koopmans (ed.), *News and Politics in Early Modern Europe (1500–1800)* (Leuven and Paris: Peeters, 2005), pp. 131–150.

*The Gamesters* similarly told audiences nothing new. It relied upon knowledgeable viewers unravelling its torrent of unexplicated allusions to contemporary political events, in order to grasp the moral force of its condemnation of Charles II.<sup>16</sup> The visual here was not a simplification of ideology formulated elsewhere, but a complex and sophisticated commentary intended for audiences conversant in current political events. In graphic satire moral energy was heightened by two factors: (1) intense topical import within a specific political moment; (2) emulation of classical satires' safeguarding of liberty through the admonishment of tyranny. Its purpose was conditioned by parliamentary debates surrounding the trial of the Catholic peers accused by Titus Oates of coordinating the (fictional) Popish Plot to conquer England, and the impeachment of Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby, by the Commons, for conspiring to impose Popery and Arbitrary Government. Both plots were utilized by the opposition to enhance the independence of Parliament against the Crown during the Succession Crisis – the promotion of constitutional government triggered by the conversion of Charles's heir, James, Duke of York, to Catholicism.

Attempts to do so during the first Exclusion Parliament of 1679 failed when Charles dissolved Parliament. The King's reluctance to call Parliament in the wake of two general elections in which opposition MPs won a significant majority, stimulated a campaign – of which our print was part – to demonstrate the weight of support for Parliament and to force Charles's hand. The second Exclusion Parliament was finally set to meet in April 1680. This was undoubtedly the event for which our print, issued on 16 March, was intended. The print made seductive allusions to the recent past and the weight of fifteen years of history coalesced into a present instance to exert the urgency of constitutional reform. Following Andrew Marvell's pamphlet, *An Account of the Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government* (1677), eve-of-Parliament blasts were prevalent in political culture. I suggest that satire accorded them added moral import. This print was an *intensive* form of ephemera, produced for a decisive moment and with a specific intention: to usher Parliament into a corrective course of action that would rid England of its greatest vice-Popery.

### Conditioned by Context

*The Gamesters* was part of the Popish Plot's second wind during the winter of 1679–1680. This was triggered by the Meal Tub Plot – the attempt by the

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16 Harold Love, *English Clandestine Satire 1660–1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 1–20, 21–65.

Catholic Lady Powis to manufacture evidence of a Protestant plot, in order to undercut the Popish Plot's momentum – in October 1679. That Powis was the wife of one of the Catholic peers accused by Oates meant that the Meal Tub Plot's revelation had a dramatic effect upon public opinion.<sup>17</sup> The plot's flagging momentum was re-energized by fresh evidence of Catholic treachery, and public pressure mounted for Parliament to sit in order to investigate the plot and undertake constitutional reform. Widespread national petitions and the tsunami of news discussion unleashed by the Licensing Act's cessation widened public engagement with politics and attempted to frighten Charles II into calling Parliament. These measures were encapsulated in the huge attendance at the London Pope-burning processions during November.<sup>18</sup> That Parliament had not been allowed to sit since May 1679 made the nature of monarchical power seem a safeguard of, rather than against, Popery. Charles's repeated refusal to receive Parliamentary counsel – he prorogued Parliament in October 1679, January 1680, and April 1680 – smacked of tyranny.<sup>19</sup>

The Popish Plot consequently merged with another (popish) plot: the Crown's attempts to override English liberties via Arbitrary Government, evidenced by Danby's Parliamentary management and the pursuit of a pro-French and anti-Dutch foreign policy.<sup>20</sup> At the close of the first Exclusion Parliament (April–May 1679), conflict between the two houses concerning the legality of the Commons' impeachment of Danby for treason scuppered prosecution of the Popish Plot peers.<sup>21</sup> The Commons' exertions against Danby had alarming echoes of Strafford's trial preceding the Civil Wars, and Charles was advised

17 *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Marquis of Ormonde, [formerly] Preserved at the Castle, Kilkenny*, new series, Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, 36 (1902–1920), vol. 5, p. 238. See also Mark Knights, *Politics and Opinion in Crisis, 1678–1681* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 61.

18 Knights, *Politics*, chapters 6–9; Peter Hinds, *The Horrid Popish Plot: Roger L'Estrange and the Circulation of Political Discourse in Late Seventeenth-Century London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

19 Knights, *Politics*, pp. 193–194, 199–204, 227.

20 Tim Harris, *Restoration: Charles II & his Kingdoms 1660–1685* (London: Penguin, 2006), pp. 83–84, 137–138; Steven C.A. Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism: Ideologies and the Making of English Foreign Policy, 1650–1668* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

21 Andrew Browning, *Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby and Duke of Leeds, 1632–1712*, 3 vols (Glasgow: Jackson, 1944–1951), vol. 1, pp. 300–341; A. Grey, *Debates of the House of Commons*, 10 vols (London, 1763), vol. 7, pp. 19–30, 57, 153–154, 176–183, 227; Mark Goldie, "Danby, the Bishops and the Whigs" in Mark Goldie, Tim Harris, and Paul Seaward (eds.), *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 75–105; John Miller, *Charles II* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1991), pp. 291, 308, 315.

that they masked a drive for total sovereignty.<sup>22</sup> Faced with dissent and deadlock Charles prorogued Parliament, effectively rendering pursuit of Danby and the plot impossible. Monarchy as the protector of 'Popery' was now the issue.<sup>23</sup>

*The Gamesters* deployed memory of these events in a satirical commentary, urging Parliament (expected to sit the following month) to pursue constitutional reform. Combining an allegorical image of recent political history with sixteen hundred words of verse dialogue in which the Pope chastised the Catholic Peers for their failure in routing Parliament, the print collapsed the 'Crown' and 'Popish' plots together. At the top-left, Charles II sits in Parliament surrounded by "Protestant Peers" and the "Loyal" House of Commons.<sup>24</sup> In the opening lies Edmund Godfrey – the magistrate who had taken Oates's Popish Plot depositions and whose subsequent murder gave their accusations of Catholic perfidy credence – presented as a martyr whose death saved the nation by exposing the plot. Godfrey's body is viewed by three "Popish Misses," a reference to William Bedloe's and Miles Prance's evidence that his corpse had been ghoulishly displayed for Catholics in Somerset House.<sup>25</sup> At the top-centre stand "The Kings Evidence" – prosecution witnesses of varying significance – pointing to the plot against Parliament/Charles (left) as a continuation of the "Catholic" fire of 1666 (right). London is torched by six Jesuits below, one of whom – Sir George Wakeman, the Queen's physician – had recently been acquitted (the first major blow to the witnesses' credibility).<sup>26</sup> In the lower-right, Pope and devil encourage Catholic peers playing nine-pins. These were the five plot leaders – Belasyse, Stafford, Arundell, Petre, and Powis – accused by Oates, and Lord Aston, whose inclusion (as we shall see) is vital in understanding the print's context. In a macabre allegory of the plot, the first bowl veers diagonally towards Charles/Parliament and is prevented from striking home by Godfrey's corpse. It is guided by Danby, indicating Parliament as the target ("Here's your ground sir"), and alludes to his attempted imposition of Arbitrary Government by undermining Parliament's constitutional powers.

22 Browning, *Danby*, vol. 2, pp. 82–88; Miller, *Charles*, p. 311.

23 See Charles's views: HMC Ormonde, NS, vol. 4, p. 495.

24 These "Protestant Peers" had voted in favour of the Commons' removal of the Bishops from Danby's trials in the previous Parliament (listed in H. Care, *The History of the Damnable Plot* (London, 1680), pp. 253–254. L'Estrange read this as seditious, accusing the state of being the problem. See L'Estrange, *Notes*, p. 29).

25 *Journals of the House of Lords*, xiii (London, 1771), pp. 29–35, 343, 350–351; R. Palmer, Earl of Castlemaine, *The Compendium, or, a Short View of the Late Tryals* (1679), pp. 14–15; John Pollock, *The Popish Plot* (London: Duckworth, 1903), pp. 384–385.

26 J.P. Kenyon, "The Acquittal of Sir George Wakeman," *Historical Journal*, 14 (1971), pp. 693–708.

Subtle differences to other Popish Plot satires deal the killing blow. On the surface the anti-Catholic iconography of 1678–1682 relied upon the repetition of commonplace iconographic tropes spanning the seventeenth century. Repetition across media (playing cards, tiles, prints, and Pope-burning processions) created a unified anti-Catholic ‘brand’, which expressed and solidified opposition sentiments. Common scenes or events, many of which occur in *The Gamesters*, were pictured repeatedly: the fire of 1666, Godfrey martyred and displayed in Somerset House, displays of the plot witnesses’ nobility, and the execution of the ‘guilty’ were all part-and-parcel of a visual vocabulary.<sup>27</sup> But our print signalled the particularity of its message (attacking the Crown as much as generic Popery) by two delicious deviations from this iconographic norm: (1) picturing Danby for the first time; and (2) indicating Parliament (rather than King) as the plot’s true target. Where much iconography protested loyalty to Charles by stressing Oates’s evidence that attempts had been made on his life, the placing of a diminutive Charles within Parliament and presenting the latter as the target of the plotters’ bowls was a subtle iconographic allusion to the idea that the ‘Crown conspiracy’ was the most significant vehicle for popery in England. In order to understand the satire’s true target, viewers were thus expected to possess a high degree of visual literacy and to be highly familiar with visual culture so as to observe *The Gamesters*’s subtle deviations from it. The verses continued this veiled attack upon the Crown in an equally exacting manner, attacking moves towards Arbitrary Government from the mid-1660s in an opaquely allusive style.<sup>28</sup>

Such allusive detail made audiences partners in the print’s satirical process, flattering their intelligence and making them ‘read’ events, however briefly, from College’s vantage point (as evidence of a Crown conspiracy). This is important for how we understand the role of graphic satire in news culture. Prints like *The Gamesters* have been analysed as secondary and non-specific forms of propaganda: static, if colourful, tokens of political sentiments formulated in texts in a generically pro or anti Exclusion manner.<sup>29</sup> I suggest that graphic satires provided a sophisticated form of political commentary, a primary form of propaganda that developed (rather than simply repeated)

27 See my “Glaring at Antichrist: printed images of the Papacy in England, c. 1530–1685” (PhD thesis, University of York, 2011), chapter 3.

28 References were made to the sale of Dunkirk to the French and the removal of resources to Tangier; the Triple League (1670); James’s conversion (1673); the fire of 1666; the Raid on the Medway (1667); and the hold of the Duchess of Portsmouth of Charles II.

29 Harris, *London Crowds*, pp. 125–128, 136–137, 140–144; Harris, *Restoration*, pp. 249–250.

ideas, and which were created, not as blanket posters of opposition ideology, but in response to particular political moments as events unfolded.

The print's central conceit, a game of nine-pins, responded to the moment's minutiae. Its incongruity – a grave plot depicted as a trifling game of skittles – piqued interest through humorous absurdity. But these nine-pins were also a reference to the evidence of Stephen Dugdale, a key witness against Stafford and Lord Aston (by whom he was previously employed). Much of Stafford's defence rested upon discrediting Dugdale as a witness by painting him as a man of ill repute. Stafford claimed that Dugdale had been dismissed by Aston for embezzlement, and that his indebtedness to Aston motivated his provision of false evidence. The prosecution endeavoured to refute this.<sup>30</sup> During January 1680, Dugdale visited the Tower to compare account books with Aston to prove that the Lord was indebted to him and not vice versa, but was unsuccessful. Aston "was not at leisure" to see him because "*he was then going up with the [Catholic] Lords to [play] Nine-Pins*". College – *The Gamesters's* designer – was the key witness to this event, and saw Aston's refusal to compare accounts as a perfidious ploy to prevent prosecution. College promised: "if I can persuade Mr. Dugdale we shall publish the Case, for the Protestant Interest suffered by it". It was that "Protestant interest" which *The Gamesters* (issued in the weeks after this event) intended to protect.<sup>31</sup>

News of the nine-pins snub caused consternation.<sup>32</sup> In *Citt and Bumpkin*, L'Estrange satirized the Whig's hyperbolic sense of injustice that the plotters were spending their time on a jolly whilst the plot unfolded and they remained untried.<sup>33</sup> *The Gamesters's* humour rested upon inverting this ire. The Pope was outraged at the peers' trifling at skittles when serious conspiring against Parliament remained to be done:

Now you turn your hand  
And howl for Farthings, whilst they firmly stand  
Like Rocks together.<sup>34</sup>

30 *Tryal of William Stafford for high treason* (1681), pp. 187–188; James Corker, *Stafford's Memories, or, A brief and impartial account of the birth and quality, imprisonment, tryal, principles, declaration, comportment, devotion, last speech, and final end of William, late Lord Viscount Stafford* (London, 1682), pp. 42–57. See also Simon Neal, *Historical Collections* (London, 1682), p. 100.

31 *Tryal of Stafford*, pp. 187–188. My italics.

32 *Plain dealing, or, A dialogue between Humphrey and Roger* (1681) – broadside; J. Dean, *The Badger in the Fox-Trap* ([London], 1680), p. 6.

33 R. L'Estrange, *Citt and Bumpkin*, pt 2 (London, 1680), p. 23.

34 BM Sat 1077.



This projection of Protestant/Parliamentary unity was what the print hoped to inspire. The objective was constitutional reform. The Pope subsequently described how he had secured the dissolution of May 1679, thus implying that Charles was a Papal servant who allowed the plot to continue endangering England.<sup>35</sup> Without his machinations in the Lords over Danby's impeachment, the peers were done for because their execution was Parliament's only hope of conveying the plot's severity: "that must be done before th' Incredulous Rout | Will ere believe that I am come about". This was a plea to Parliament to lead the charge. The memory of April/May 1679 was employed to urge continued pursuit of Danby and the peers as a lever of constitutional reform. As the Pope exclaimed: "A Parliament comes next, and off go all your Heads".<sup>36</sup>

The print ushered its audience into angry agreement. It celebrated Parliament's achievements in safeguarding England from plots thus far, and raged at its being hindered from carrying the day at the vital moment. Satirical bite was more cutting for involving viewers in the act of completion. Rather than broadening debate, the density of references that the print employed, and the level of prior knowledge required to unravel them, cultivated an intimacy between College and the audience he called to action. College positioned his course of action as the reasonable one. The print's fictitious imprint – "Printed at the half-way House that stood betwixt Bothwel-Bridge and Holy Rood-House" – referred to the Battle of Bothwell Bridge (22 June 1677) which had ended a severe Presbyterian revolt, and to James, now High Commissioner of Scotland, whose seat was Hollyrood House, Edinburgh. College positioned his print "halfway" between Catholic Succession (tyranny) and seditious Presbyterianism (anarchy) at the place of truth – the truth of pursuing the plot, and with it the constitutional reform necessary to safeguard England against Popery.<sup>37</sup>

### The Momentous Present

*The Gamesters*, then, was a piece of intensive ephemera: a work exerting pressure and lobbying for action at a vital *instance* of politics. Suggesting that its power was a product of its transience inverts the criteria of eighteenth-century art theory which spawned the neglect of single-sheet satires as objects of study. Topicality was anathema to greatness; 'Great Art' conveyed universal values

35 BM Sat 1077: "What shame is it (ye Gamesters) for to see [...] | Of *Commons-Foes* who're gathered in the Land".

36 BM Sat 1077.

37 Harris, *Restoration*, pp. 169–170, 196–203, 330–333.

which graphic satires, by virtue of their rapid obsolescence, were incapable of achieving.<sup>38</sup> The legacy of that prejudice persists in contemporary scholarship. Masters like Hogarth, Rowlandson, and Gillray are still studied disproportionately at the expense of the broad mass of anonymous eighteenth-century engravers, distorting the impression of visual culture as it was experienced by contemporaries.<sup>39</sup> I suggest rather that prints affected an audience precisely *because* of their topicality: that by imposing satire's moralizing urge to correct vice on a precise political moment, prints like *The Gamesters* invoked specific political action. As tactical responses to the momentary, visual satires extended the capacity of the regular rhythm of news to inject what C. John Sommerville termed "urgency into the mundane".<sup>40</sup>

That urgency conditioned how contemporary audiences experienced graphic satires. As Daniel Woolf has shown, the news explosion stimulated a change in experience of the 'present' as a discrete period of time distinct from 'past' and 'future'.<sup>41</sup> This concept of the present was markedly different from how contemporaneity was experienced two centuries earlier.<sup>42</sup> Although there was a remembered past and an expected future during the earlier period, the present did not exist beyond the instant and was consequently rarely understood as a significant historical juncture or conceived as part of ongoing social or national narratives. By 1700 the present was no longer an instant but a *duration*, a discrete period of time understood to have been caused by the past, and capable of steering the future.<sup>43</sup> The formalization of news reportage was pivotal to this shift: a European-wide postage network allowed for information exchange between printers, routinized the arrival of news, and shortened the time between an event's occurrence and its reportage. The result, Woolf suggests, was an urgent sense of 'now' as a part of public

38 Donald, *Caricature*, pp. 27–31. Jonathan Richardson, "Of Grace and Greatness" in id., *The Theory of Painting* (London, 1715).

39 Gatrell, *Laughter*. See also Mark Hallet, *The Spectacle of Difference: Graphic Satire in the Age of Hogarth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Mark Hallet and Richard T. Godfrey, *James Gillray: The Art of Caricature* (London: Tate, 2001).

40 C. John Sommerville, *The News Revolution in England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 8.

41 Daniel Woolf, "News, history and the construction of the present in early modern England" in Dooley and Baron (eds.), *Politics of Information*, pp. 80–118. J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels* (London and New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), pp. 168–172.

42 On the present see Donlad A. Norman, *Learning and Memory* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1982); G.J. Whitrow, *The Natural Philosophy of Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 74–83.

43 Woolf, "News," pp. 82–88, 94–99, 106–107.

consciousness, and which demanded to be recorded. In this context everything flowed through topicality, and *The Gamesters* rested upon the sense that the momentous occurred in the momentary.

The oral aspect of that empowered present is vital. Scholars have demonstrated that far from sounding its death-knell, the print explosion heightened facets of oral culture.<sup>44</sup> Written news often originated in rumour, and acted to provoke political chatter upon publication. The experience of the 'momentous present' was consequently realized by the capacity of news media to animate conversation in and about politics.<sup>45</sup> How could one print have an impact against this wall of noise? Crucially, satire created pockets of pointed critique amidst the confusion. Contemporary theorists note that political humour conversationalizes politics through sound-biting – the provision of an acute slogan or conceit which (like the nine-pins) pulls audiences through the confused noise of news, providing a platform on which discussion can focus.<sup>46</sup> That platform may be fleeting, but it is heated – and therefore has impact – during its moment of existence.

If the momentousness of the present was one crucial factor conditioning *The Gamesters's* satirical import, the representational was another. Depicting the Popish Plot as a game of nine-pins was mock-heroic, parodying the form of epic painting and poetry with wholly incongruous content.<sup>47</sup> Mock-heroics often adopted the cadences of pentameter couplet (as do *The Gamesters's* verses) to mimic the gravity of the classical grand style.<sup>48</sup> This heroic aspect garnered satire greater moral import. Whilst earlier writers had styled satire as comic (a lowlier, unheroic mode), Dryden deemed it tragic, and therefore, in a sense, heroic. Consequently, if the moral import of the heroic mode was transcendent, then satire, whatever its topicality, must be too.<sup>49</sup> Fifty years later, Hogarth elevated the particular elements of his engravings to the universal by

44 The literature on this subject is vast, but see for example Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

45 See Steve Pincus, "'Coffee Politicians Does Create': Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture," *Journal of Modern History*, 67 (1995), pp. 807–834.

46 Marianthi Geogalidou, "'Stop Caressing the ears of the hooded': Political humour in times of conflict" in Villy Tsakona and Diana Elena Popa (eds.), *Studies in Political Humour* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamin, 2011), pp. 83–107; Norman Fairclough, *Media Discourse* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1995).

47 Ritchie Robertson, *Mock Epic Poetry from Pope to Heine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

48 Love, *Clandestine*, pp. 107–116. Andrew Marvell's *Instructions to a Painter* is exemplary here.

49 John Dryden, *Discourse on Satyr* (London, 1692), pp. 62–84.

reference to the mock-heroic, making compositional allusions to the old masters of history painting to force viewers to read wider resonances into his everyday depictions and consequently making them more acceptable as morally elevating depictions of virtue and vice.<sup>50</sup> *The Gamesters's* equally self-conscious definition of itself as satire, similarly subverted the ephemeral nature of its medium in order to heighten the moral import of its commentary on Danby's impeachment and the Catholic peers' trial. In combining verse and image, single-sheet satires existed as an aspect of the dialogical relationship between painting and poetry in classical literary theory (*Ut Pictura Poesis*).<sup>51</sup> That relationship proved critical to the elevation of satire to an art form – and therefore an acceptable, rather than scurrilous, form of political discourse – by Augustan satirists, whose verse emulated forms of history painting to garner moral import.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, Du Fresnoy noted that both mediums strove to produce affecting and heightened representations of virtue and vice to teach their audiences through pleasure.<sup>53</sup> One of the obstacles facing painters was capturing the dramatic thrust of a narrative in a static scene. They were required to collapse chronologies and combine incidents from different times in a single conceit.<sup>54</sup> This was precisely what College achieved. Referring to Godfrey's death in 1666, the 1679 Parliaments, and a fifteen-year conspiracy for Arbitrary Government, he conveyed the notion of the momentous present. By weaving the vicissitudes of the recent past into one conceit, he amplified the sense of England's fate hanging in the balance of Parliament's continued pursuit of Danby and the Catholic Peers.

For contemporaries, such histrionics could be truly affecting. At its best, noted Dryden, painting had an immediate impact which poetry could not match:

[It is] to the advantage of painting, even above tragedy, that what this last represents in the space of many hours, the former shows us in one

50 Ronald Paulson, "The Harlot's Progress and the Tradition of History Painting," *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 1 (1967), pp. 69–92.

51 Richardson, *Theory of Painting*, pp. 20–22, 44–46, 69–71; Horace, *Ars poetica*, 1. 361.

52 Vincent Carretta, *The Snarling Muse: Verbal and Visual Political Satire from Pope to Churchill* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), pp. xiii–xxi, 1–61.

53 C.A. Du Fresnoy, *De Arte Graphica* (London, 1695), p. 1; Rensselaer W. Lee, "Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting," *Art Bulletin*, 22 (1940), pp. 197–269.

54 Le Brun, "Conferences" in M. Henry Jouin, *Conférences de l'Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture* (Paris: A. Quantin, 1883), pp. 62–64; [Anthony Ashley Cooper Shaftesbury], *A Notion of the Historical Draught or Tablature of the Judgement of Hercules* ([London], 1713); Richardson, *Essay*, pp. 56–61; Paulson, "Progress," pp. 71–75.

moment. The action, the passion [...] of so many persons as are contained in a picture are to be discerned at once, in the twinkling of an eye.<sup>55</sup>

Graphic satire was intended to share in that import.

### Satire as a Moral Activity

To understand how *The Gamesters's* mock-heroism was experienced by seventeenth-century audiences necessitates grasping the force accorded to satire's morally compelling images of virtue and vice in early modern society. In satire, words could *effect* change.<sup>56</sup> The satyr – half man, half beast – thrashed vice out of its subject, making it so ridiculous that audiences were inspired to scoff at and resist it.<sup>57</sup> This punitive aspect often makes modern readers uncomfortable with Restoration satire as a form that desire rejects.<sup>58</sup> But for seventeenth-century audiences, satire's purpose was social, not aesthetic. Heavily indebted to its ritualistic origins as an efficacious practice that expunged undesirable elements from the social body, satire only became art – and thus the subject of literary analysis – at the point when belief in that efficacy ceased.<sup>59</sup> Seventeenth-century audiences were consequently unlikely to have evaluated satires from the vantage point of our aesthetic squeamishness.<sup>60</sup> That which repels modern readers – the satirists' capacity to convey corrosive scorn – was precisely what made satires so compelling as vehicles safeguarding against vice, in the context in which they were conceived.

55 Quoted in Carretta, *Snarling*, p. 12.

56 Michael Seidel, *Satiric Inheritance: Rabelias to Sterne* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); George Test, *Satire: Spirit and Art* (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1991); Steven E. Jones, *Satire and Romanticism* (London: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 1–8, on satire's rhetorical power and social/political functions in the Romantic era.

57 Howard D. Weinbrot, *Eighteenth-Century Satire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 4; Richard Nash, "Satyrs and Satire in Augustan England" in Brian A. Connery and Kirke Combe (eds.), *Theorizing Satire – Essays in Literary Criticism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), pp. 95–105.

58 F.V. Bogel, "The Difference Satire Makes: Reading Swift's Poems" in Connery and Combe (eds.), *Theorizing Satire*, pp. 43–53; Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

59 Mary Claire Randolph, "The Medical Concept in English Renaissance Satiric Theory," *Studies in Philology*, 38 (1941), pp. 125–157.

60 Robert C. Elliott, *The Power of Satire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960).

By emulating their classical forbears, seventeenth-century satirists accorded their works didactic and political functions. Wits of the Jacobean Inns of Court styled themselves as civilized public advisors, in order to dissociate their satires from lowly and disruptive forms of humour.<sup>61</sup> Like classical rhetoricians – and unlike lowly satirical invective – the wits counselled the monarch with advice that it was his duty to hear for the commonwealth's health.<sup>62</sup> Refusal to listen was tyrannous. By the late seventeenth century, the choice of classical satirist emulated – Horace, Persius, or Juvenal – was often a conscious political statement.<sup>63</sup> Horace's softer invective was understood to be a product of his status as a conquered poet who was employed by the regime he critiqued. By contrast, Juvenal – removed from the regime – was liberty's true champion, inveighing against corrupt powers in tones as grand as his moral purpose. Emulating Juvenal accorded political resistance a moral credibility.<sup>64</sup> For Dryden – writing against the 'tyranny' of the post-1688 monarchy – Juvenal's keenness was essential:

His *Thoughts are sharper* [than Horace's], his Indignation against *Vice is more vehement*; [...] he treats Tyranny [...] with the utmost rigour: And consequently, a Noble Soul is better pleas'd with a Zealous Vindicator of *Roman Liberty*; than with a Temporizing Poet [Horace], a well Manner'd Court Slave [...] who is often afraid of Laughing in the right place.<sup>65</sup>

Here satire's political agency – its capacity to reveal tyranny, champion liberty, and enliven audiences into action – was a direct extension of its binary structure: the greater the vice scorned, the greater the virtue inspired. Thus for Dryden the vices lashed must be "Tragical," "the most enormous that can be

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- 61 Michelle O'Callaghan, *The English Wits* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), chapters 1 and 2; J.G. Nicholls, *The Poetry of Ben Jonson* (London: Routledge, 1969), pp. 108–109; Max W. Thomas, "Kemp's *Nine Daies Wonder*: Dancing Carnival into the Market," *PMLA* 107 (1992), pp. 511–523. See William Webbe, *A Discourse of English Poetrie* (London, 1586); George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (London, 1589).
  - 62 O'Callaghan, *Wits*, pp. 30–34; Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought, 1570–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 60–65; Paul Raffield, *Images and Cultures of Law in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 35–49.
  - 63 See Howard D. Weinbrot, "History, Horace and Augustus Caesar: Some Implications for Eighteenth-Century Satire," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 7 (1974), pp. 391–414.
  - 64 See Howard D. Weinbrot, "The Pattern of Formal Verse Satire in the Restoration and the Eighteenth Century," *PMLA*, 80 (1965), pp. 394–401; Dryden, *Satyr*, pp. 66–69.
  - 65 Dryden, *Satyr*, p. 69.

imagin'd," inspiring audiences to "Elevated [...] Noble [...] sublime and lofty" thoughts.<sup>66</sup> *The Gamesters* was surely conceived in this vein: what vice was more tyrannous than popery?

For Dryden, effective satire coupled acidity with acuteness. There was a:

vast difference between the slovenly Butchering of a man, and the fineness of a stroke that separates the Head from the Body, and leaves it standing in its place.<sup>67</sup>

This was death by eloquence, a union of literary refinement and devastating moral power. Here, then, the aesthetic form and didactic function were inseparable: the former delighting an audience and making them more willing to submit to the latter's lessons.<sup>68</sup> The nine-pins conceit – at once simple, mock-heroic, and weaving many strands of news discourse into one condensed attack – exemplified acuteness in action.

The aesthetic import of that acuteness is crucial in understanding the reformatory force *The Gamesters* aspired to in the public sphere. That this was not a dispassionate dissemination of news is self-evident, but contemporary understanding of satire's capacity to inspire action through words and/or images – to effect (moral) change by affecting their audiences – must be stressed. As epideictic forms of writing, satire and panegyric were siblings.<sup>69</sup> Both employed vehement (written) images of virtues (panegyric) and vice (satire) as emotive vehicles of moral tenors to inspire pursuit of virtue, or assent to a given ethical or political position. I suggest that the graphic aspects of satire in a piece like *The Gamesters* heightened that capacity – that if the loftiness and majesty of images crafted with words inspired moral action, then *picturing* them in allegorical form may have been even more affective. Recent studies stress that graphic satire was a composite medium of cultures high and low, oral and textual.<sup>70</sup> Placing *The Gamesters* within wider epideictic traditions, we perceive hosts of unspoken resonances about the power of images of virtue

66 Ibid., pp. 62–63.

67 Ibid., p. 71.

68 Delight was a foundation of rhetorical writing rejuvenated at the Renaissance. See Hanna Gray, "Renaissance Humanism: The Pursuit of Eloquence" in Robert Black (ed.), *Renaissance Thought: A Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 60–67.

69 Jon Rowland, "From Cheated Sight to False Light: Analogy in Swift and Churchill" in Connery and Combe (eds.), *Theorizing Satire*, pp. 107–132.

70 See Pierce, *Unseemly Pictures*; Angela McShane and Clare Backhouse, "Top Knots and Lower Sorts: Prints and Promiscuous Consumption in the early 1690s" in Michael Hunter (ed.), *Printed Images in Early Modern Britain* (Aldershot, 2010), pp. 337–357.

and vice to enact, and the satirist's moral duty as counsellor in the public sphere.

Those resonances surely had a keen import when injected into a specific political moment such as the anticipation of the April 1680 Parliament. *The Gamesters's* acidity was neater precisely *because* of its intensive ephemerality.<sup>71</sup> The print urged Parliament into two forms of action concerning the Succession Crisis: (1) pursuing the Catholic Peers' trial scuppered by the previous Parliament's 'Danby moment'; and (2) pursuing constitutional reforms safeguarding against Popery and Arbitrary Government. We will treat these in succession.

Answering their chastisement by the Pope for inaction, the Lords' reply reminded readers of Marvell's evidence of a conspiracy to establish Arbitrary Government; and raised the issue of Oates's reliability:

Before we to the present *Trick* [the plot] did fall;  
 [...] w'had done the Devil and all.  
 And what that is, your Holiness can guess,  
 For wee'l be damn'd ere any on't confess.  
 Nor does it matter whether we do or not,  
 Since *Heretick-Commons* have so much on't got,  
 By him whose name *Oaten-Fipe* [Titus Oates] doth fret  
 Our very Guts, as on the Tenters set,  
 We curse our Stars he is not ruin'd yet.  
 But there's some hopes, by what we hear of late,  
 Whose Lives he sav'd, requite him with their hate.  
 A good reward! But had he half on't done  
 For Mother Church, he had the Popedom won.<sup>72</sup>

The purpose here is threefold: firstly, to undercut Tory propagandists, like L'Estrange, who had undermined the plot's severity by pointing to inconsistencies in Oates's evidence; secondly, to imply that ruining Oates was part of plot; and thirdly, to remind Parliament how much evidence Oates had provided against the Catholic peers at the point when their trial was about to be re-raised. College closes:

*To conclude [...]*  
*England will nere be safe, nor Christendom,*  
*Till all your Necks under the Hatchet come.*

71 Jones, *Satire and Romanticism*, pp. 9–12; Connery and Combe (eds.), *Theorizing Satire*, p. 5.

72 BM Sat 1077.



This rallying call challenged Parliament to meet these lustful expectations.

The second call for action was subtle and seditious. In replying to the Pope's claim to have scuppered the Commons' attempts to try Danby in the previous Parliament, the Catholic Peers scoffed at the idea that the pontiff was the power behind enduring Catholic conspiracies in England:

Tell us'twas *He kept Common-Foes from sitting!*  
'Tis known he lies: for, did we think it fitting,  
We other Reasons for the same could show,  
Truth he (perhaps Infallible) doth know.  
But let that pass: 'tis done[.]

We teeter here upon the libellous. These "other Reasons" surely refer to Charles II: by implying that he conspired to prevent Parliament from acting against Danby's popery (by delaying its sitting for a year), College makes the Crown the principle threat to English liberties. This is surely why L'Estrange found the print so seditious, calling it:

*a venemous Libel upon all the Orders of the Government; and first upon the King himself, charging all the Pretened Miscarriages of State, in Shew, upon the Papists, but in Truth [...] upon his Majesty.*<sup>73</sup>

Grasping these calls to action relied heavily upon audience inference. But satire, densely referential and assuming prior knowledge, invited audiences into the act of completion through an imbalance in its opposition of virtue and vice. As the latter was almost always presented more fully than the former, the persuasive effect was one of action through repulsion.<sup>74</sup> As Mary Randolph has noted, attack outweighed praise:

since, paradoxically, in the very act of presenting the negative or destructive side of human behaviour the satirist is establishing a positive foundation on which he can base his specific recourse to virtue.<sup>75</sup>

73 L'Estrange, *Notes*, p. 29.

74 Mary Clare Randolph, "Thomas Drant's Definition of Satire, 1566," *Notes and Queries*, 180 (1941), pp. 416–418; Alvin Kernan, "Aggression and Satire: Art Considered as a Form of Biological Adaptation" in Frank Brady and John Palmer (eds.), *Literary Theory and Structure: Essays in Honour of William K. Wimsatt* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 115–129.

75 Mary Clare Randolph, "The Structural Design of the Formal Verse Satire," *Print Quarterly* 21 (1942), p. 373.

That recourse was often implied (as here).<sup>76</sup> In utilizing visceral presentation of the negative (Catholic perfidy) to inspire positive action (pursuing the plot/constitutional reform), *The Gamesters* towed the line with contemporary literary theory. Persuasion occurred through a unification of author and audience in righteous anger. Thus Dryden admired the infectious ire of Juvenal's "vigorous and masculine wit" which the reader could only share: "His spleen is rais'd, and he raises mine".<sup>77</sup>

### Stephen College and Roger L'Estrange – Satire Versus Seditious

I have argued that the place of the visual within news culture rested upon its indebtedness to satire, and its finite and responsive particularity. Constructed for knowing viewers who completed the satirical act by unravelling the print's allusions – and in doing so were (ideally) persuaded to accept its revelation of vice and inspired to move towards its correction – graphic satire's power rested upon the urgent moment of its creation. This was intensive ephemera, created for and conditioned by the topicality of a newly important present. Responses typifying *The Gamesters* as seditious suggest that satirical intensity was understood to be capable of inspiring dangerous actions. Denying its claims to be a legitimate counsel safeguarding England's liberties, responses focussed instead on the print's mockery endangering the realm by corroding the ties of respect that bound society together. For L'Estrange satire certainly possessed agency, but it was the agency to rupture society, rather than to reform it.

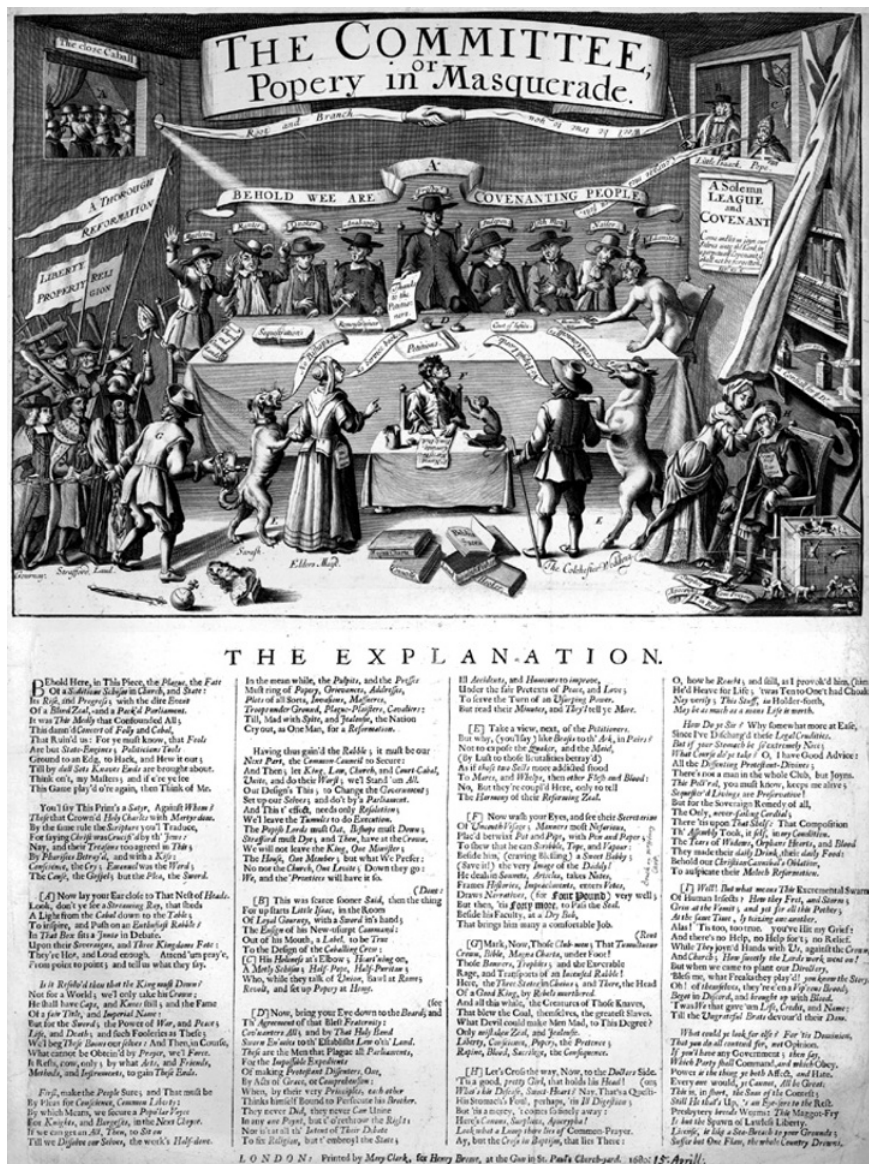
This agency established a niche for graphic satire within the print marketplace. Single-sheet satires became increasingly dialogical because responding to mockery in kind contained its impact: mocking the mocker sought to delegitimize the original satirical act. The Succession Crisis occasioned the emergence of the first purely visual polemical exchange.<sup>78</sup> Scholars commonly understand this to have begun with a complex print by L'Estrange, *The Committee; or Popery in Masquerade* (1680) (see Fig. 6.2).<sup>79</sup> Here – in a cutting

76 See, *The Works of Alexander Pope*, ed. William Warburton, 9 vols (London, 1751), vol. 3, pp. 229–230, 263; A. Dacier, *Oeuvres d'Horace* (1681–1689), 8, sig. A3; John Dryden, *Essays*, ed. W.P. Ker, 2 vols (Oxford, 1926), vol. 2, pp. 100–104. Weinbrot, *Satire*, pp. 11–20.

77 Dryden, *Discourse*, p. 63.

78 Antony Griffiths, *The Print in Stuart Britain* (London: British Museum, 1998), p. 287; Malcolm Jones, *The Print in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 165–166. See also Pierce, *Unseemly Pictures*, pp. 171–176.

79 BM Sat 1080.

FIGURE 6.2 The Committee; or Popery in Masquerade (1680), *BM Sat 1080*

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indictment of the opposition's moves for greater Parliamentary sovereignty – various non-conformist sects form a committee, which receives petitions from a dog and a horse, whilst below, Charles I and other victims of the Civil Wars are led in chains (left) and a Church of England minister is forced to vomit up



established vehicle of political controversy than previously recognized.<sup>81</sup> The chronology fits – *The Gamesters* was issued on 16 March; *The Committee* on 15 April – as does the ideology.<sup>82</sup> *The Gamesters* accused the Crown of a “popish” conspiracy against English liberties as safeguarded by Parliamentary powers, whilst *The Committee* suggested that attempts to safeguard those powers by altering the Succession was a conspiracy to subvert monarchy, masquerading as a protection of the realm from popery. Moreover, *The Committee*’s design was a riposte to the closing of the Pope’s speech in *The Gamesters*:

down with Pins [...]  
 Let each Man fall to Plotting in his Soul [...]  
 Cabal together, *Guinnies* will, I’m sure,  
 Keep *Argos* Hands, the hundred Eyes secure;  
 And ere’t be long some Stratagem contrive,  
 Which may your Freedoms and my cause retrieve [...]  
 To make all sure, this my Counsel is,  
 Which being follow’d, doubtless cannot miss;  
 Pursue the Game I’t’h *Meal Tub* was begun,  
 And he that dares that bold Adventure run,  
 Shall be my Darling, Satan’s eldest Son.  
 Follow that close, get *Presbyterian* down,  
 The day’s our own, ye cannot miss the Crown.<sup>83</sup>

The context here was the Meal Tub Plot – a plot invented by Catholics to divert attention away from the Popish Plot by claiming that it was fabricated by dissenters (Presbyterians) to whip up anti-Catholic fervour and manipulate Parliament into overthrowing the Crown, echoing the events of 1640–1642.<sup>84</sup> The line, “Get Presbyterian down [...] ye cannot miss the Crown,” referred to these attempts to discredit the dissenters – a significant part of the Exclusion lobby – thus leaving England vulnerable to popish assaults. The champion of this popish strategy – “Satan’s eldest son,” who continued “the Game I’t’h Meal Tub begun” – was surely L’Estrange, whose works persistently poked at memories

81 Joseph Monteyne, *The Printed Image in Early Modern London* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), argues persuasively that England’s graphic industry was reaching maturation during the late 1670s.

82 Both copies in the British Museum are annotated and dated in the hand of Narcissus Luttrell.

83 BM Sat 1077.

84 John Kenyon, *The Popish Plot* (London: Phoenix, 2000), pp. 189–190, 199, 221.

of previous attempts at constitutional change by “Presbyterians” (i.e. the Civil Wars), to undermine the plot as a lever of constitutional change.<sup>85</sup>

*The Committee* responded in a contra-textual manner, mocking the words, images, and ideology of *The Gamesters*, in order to discredit them, and thereby positively establishing its own position. For L'Estrange the “Presbyterians” did not protect the Crown, but endangered it. It was they, not the Court, who “Caball[ed] together” – a pun on the initials of prominent opposition leaders (Clifford, Ashley, Buckingham, Arlington and Lauderdale) – overlooking the committee of Presbyterians who plot for anarchy under two joined hands (top-left). What other purpose do the latter serve if not as a delicious wink to *The Gamesters*’ “Guinnies will [...] keep *Argos* Hands, the hundred Eyes secure | And ere’t be long some Stratagem contrive, Which may your Freedoms and my cause retrieve”? In *The Committee*, dangerous freedoms are “Presbyterian,” not “Popish”; namely parliamentary sovereignty. This would not protect England’s political order (as College urged), but destroy it:

*What could ye look for else? For’tis Dominion,  
That you do all contend for, not Opinion.  
If you’ll have any Government; then say,  
Which Party shall Command, and which Obey.  
Power is the thing ye both Affect, and Hate,  
Every one would, ye Cannot, All be Great.  
This is, in short, the Sum of the Contest;  
Still He that’s Up’s an Eye-sore for to the Rest.  
Presbytery breeds Worms: This Maggot-Fry  
Is but the Spawn of Lawless Liberty.  
License, is like a Sea-Breach to your Ground;  
Suffer but One Flaw, the whole Country Drowns.*<sup>86</sup>

It speaks volumes of the capacity of the visual that the positions advocated by one graphic satire required refutation with another: College’s corrective virtue had to be restyled as corrosive vice. For L'Estrange the issue was license, of news collapsing into excessive and fractious liberty by passing beyond the dictates of permissible public discourse into matters of state.<sup>87</sup> Whilst College

85 Harris, *Restoration*, pp. 219–220. On the opposition masking their intentions through ‘popery’ see L'Estrange, *Observer*, i, 58, 1/10/1681, recto; i, 160 24/6/1682 recto; id., *Narrative of the plot*, p. 21; *Brief History of the Times* (1687), i, 5, ii, 89.

86 BM Sat 1080.

87 R. L'Estrange, *A Word concerning Libels and Libellers* (London, 1681); id., *A Short Answer to a Whole Litter of Libels* (London, 1680).

(and later satirists) understood satire as an exercise of counsel safeguarding against tyranny (corrective), L'Estrange saw only mockery destroying the hierarchical bonds holding society together (corrosive). Yet both understood it to possess exceptional import. Whether licentious or revelatory, the force of this news rested upon the combination of satirical agency and intensive ephemerality. Momentous within the moment, that L'Estrange felt compelled to counter *The Gamesters* by charging it with sedition, was a backhanded compliment to graphic satire's power as commentary with a heightened import to inspire action within the public sphere.

### Conclusion

Visual media was as much a species of satire as news. Pierce and Sharpe noted that graphic satires were a medley of tropes, high and low, textual and iconographic, and in overlapping with other news media *The Gamesters* was no exception. Yet we must distinguish between graphic satires *responding* to news media, and being *absorbed* into it. Two observations are significant: (1) its increasingly dialogical nature suggests that graphic satire had its own space within the print marketplace; and (2) its allusive opacity suggests that this space existed for a highly politically literate audience. Alive to the plot trials, manuscript satire, and parliamentary debate, *The Gamesters* was a responsive commentary intensely active only in the instant it was issued. That intensity rested upon emulation of classical satirists' provision of political counsel – College's mock-heroic print drew implicit parallels between his protest against Danby/Charles and the classical satirists' defence of liberty against tyranny. Moreover, satire's didactic reform or correction through the vivid presentation of virtue and vice, was heightened by the visual aspect: our print was, after all, an allegorical map of the ongoing political crisis. Demanding and dense, *The Gamesters* teased audiences into engaging with its ideology by inviting them to unlock its allusions. Such audience involvement heightened the print's impact. That satire was understood as a form of action accorded visual media considerable agency in the politics of agitation. Competent readers expected satire to perform moral functions, rallying collective anger around a shared target to urge its expulsion. For others, like L'Estrange, these potentialities possessed subversive import necessitating an extensive retort in kind. If left uncontained, ridicule's corrosiveness had a long half-life: thus in *Absalom and Achitophel*, Dryden thought it necessary to rebuff satires published more than ten years earlier.<sup>88</sup>

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88 Love, *Clandestine*, pp. 117–118.

It was Charles, not L'Estrange, who ultimately undercut *The Gamesters*. The Parliament of April 1680 for which it was intended, never sat, prorogued by the king until October.<sup>89</sup> Nor was the print's resolution ever fulfilled. With the exception of Stafford, none of the peers were tried and the Commons were never revenged upon Danby. But although missing its intended mark, our print undoubtedly had an impact: L'Estrange's response – both immediately in *The Committee* and a year later after College's execution – testifies to its power. But another response is perhaps more revealing. In August 1683, Lord Petre was reportedly “very merry” in the Tower, announcing that he expected to be “cleared about next spring [...] by Parliament”. The context for this declaration? A game of nine-pins on the Tower's green.<sup>90</sup> That could be read as coincidence. Or, perhaps, it was intended as a stinging rebuff to the opposition as the plot exhausted itself. We might see it as evidence of the precision-power of satirical imagery to cut through the noise of news discourse and to become part of the vocabulary of politics.

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89 Miller, *Charles*, pp. 329–331, 334–335.

90 CSP Dom., 1683, p. 308.



**PART 3**

*News and Social History*





# Rumour, Newsletters, and the Pope's Death in Early Modern Rome

*John M. Hunt*

The history of news in early modern Europe has recently become a major focus of scholarly attention. Scholars have investigated the news, both in its printed and manuscript forms, studied the veracity and opinion of news, and located it in the burgeoning scholarship on international affairs and the public sphere.<sup>1</sup> Although gaining some recent attention, rumours and the local origins of news have been largely neglected by scholars. This study seeks to understand the interplay between rumours and newsletters by interpreting local events in papal Rome during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It will examine the rumours, news, and populace's reading of events leading up to the pope's death.

No event garnered as much attention in Rome as the possibility of the reigning pope's death. The possibility of such event provoked anxiety and excitement among the populace. Romans, both at court and in the city, were astute observers of the pope's health and daily activities. They remained attuned to signs of his imminent death, which included prolonged illnesses, missing important liturgical duties and ceremonies, omens and prognostications, and, above all, the preparations the papal government made to ready the city for an interregnum. This news travelled through rumour and manuscript newsletters

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1 The work on early modern news is ever growing. For good introductions to the field and current debates, see Sabrina Alcorn Baron and Brendan Dooley (eds.), *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2001); Brendan Dooley (ed.), *The Dissemination of News and the Emergence of Contemporaneity in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010); Joop W. Koopmans (ed.), *News and Politics in Early Modern Europe, 1500–1800* (Leuven: Brill, 2005); and Joad Raymond (ed.), *News, Newspapers and Society in Early Modern Britain* (London: Routledge, 1999). For important monographs, see Filippo De Vivo, *Information and Communication in Venice: Rethinking Early Modern Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Brendan Dooley, *The Social History of Skepticism: Experience and Doubt in Early Modern Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); and Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks, 1641–1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). See also the introduction to this volume.

called *avvisi*.<sup>2</sup> Rumours, spread primarily by word of mouth, can be difficult to trace. Although historians will never have direct access to their oral forms, their echoes can be found in the diaries and newsletters of the city. Newsletters in turn, not only kept rumours alive but also provoked rumours and could influence the content of the oral word. Thus, much of the rumour-mongering and news-gathering concerning the pope's health and death, centred on face-to-face, often oral encounters.<sup>3</sup>

Print played a negligible role in the dissemination of rumour and news concerning the pope's death for a variety of reasons. First, the papacy kept a tight rein over the printing houses of the city, censoring any printed writings injurious to the pope's person and reputation.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, to publish printed treatises and satires against the pope, one had to find safer havens in Venice and cities outside Italy in Protestant lands. More important was the fact that by the time the news of the pope's death had reached cities beyond Italy and could be printed, it had become old news, already verified in manuscript as false or true.<sup>5</sup> The most expedient method of keeping abreast of the pope's health was by rumour in Rome and by the newsletters elsewhere in Italy and Europe.

- 2 On *avvisi*, see Mario Infelise, "Roman *Avvisi*: Information and Politics in the Seventeenth Century" in Gianvittorio Signorotto and Maria Antonietta Visceglia (eds.), *Court and Politics in Papal Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 212–228; Cesare D'Onofrio, "Gli 'Avvisi' di Roma dal 1554 al 1605", *Studi Romani*, 10 (1962), pp. 529–548; Brendan Dooley, "De bonne main: les pourvoyeurs de nouvelles à Rome au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle", *Annales: Histoire, Sciences sociales*, 6 (1999), pp. 1317–1344; and De Vivo, *Information and Communication*, pp. 80–85. On rumour see Jean-Noël Kapferer, *Rumors: Use, Interpretations, and Images* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1990); James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 144–147; Adam Fox, "Rumor, News, and Popular Public Opinion in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England", *The Historical Journal*, 40 (1997), pp. 592–620; id., *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 335–405; and Georges Lefebvre, *The Great Fear: Rural Panic in Revolutionary France* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979).
- 3 For the oral nature of rumours and news, see Massimo Rospocher and Rosa Salzberg, "An Evanescent Public Sphere: Voices, Spaces, and Publics in Venice during the Italian Wars" in Massimo Rospocher (ed.), *Beyond the Public Sphere: Opinions, Publics, Spaces in Early Modern Europe* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012), pp. 93–114; Elizabeth Horodowich, *Language and Statecraft in Early Modern Venice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 126–164.
- 4 Infelise, "Roman *Avvisi*," pp. 212–214. On church censorship in Italy, see Gigliola Fragnito, "The Central and Peripheral Organization of Censorship" in Gigliola Fragnito (ed.), *Church, Censorship and Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 13–49.
- 5 Andrew Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 340–341; Ian Atherton, "The Itch Grown a Disease: Manuscript Transmission of News in

This chapter will also examine the local nature of news by contextualizing it among the events, often ritualized, which sparked off rumours of the pope's death in Rome. News of the pope's death interested a variety of people. Romans looked forward to the liberty of *sede vacante*, the period between the pope's death and the election of his predecessor: avengers plotted assaults against enemies with the cessation of papal law during the vacancy; magistrates of Rome's civic government – the Popolo Romano – anticipated increased jurisdictional authority with the waning of papal law; and the city in general eagerly awaited the papal election that would initiate a new regime.<sup>6</sup> If the pope enjoyed a bad reputation, the populace stirred with glee at the prospect of rebelling against his regime by assaulting his statue located at the Capitoline Hill. In this context, misinformation remained supreme as rumours, half-truths, and outright lies played on the populace's hopes and fears, provoking a great deal of turmoil and chaos in the streets of Rome.

Rumours of the pope's death kept Rome on edge. The imminent death of the pope sparked rampant murmured discussion among the populace, which remained attuned to any signs that the pope's reign was at an end.<sup>7</sup> This discussion, fed by rumour, the newsletters, and the court gossip of papal servants and ambassadors, in turn increased the widespread belief in a looming *sede vacante*. Much of the public discussion focused on the pope's poor health. Persistently ill popes stimulated the fears and hopes of Romans as they waited for a *sede vacante* that could take months, sometimes even years, to come, as popes, typically elected as old men, often suffered from a myriad of ailments and illnesses. The pope's health was thus a recurrent topic of public interest. This can be gleaned from the deluge of newsletters that discussed the prolonged illnesses of Paul IV in 1558–1559, Sixtus V in 1590, and Clement VIII in 1604–1605.<sup>8</sup> These microscopic lenses directed at the pope's health often

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the Seventeenth Century" in Raymond (ed.), *News, Newspapers, and Society in Early Modern Britain*, pp. 40–42.

6 On *sede vacante*, see Laurie Nussdorfer, "The Vacant See: Ritual and Protest in Early Modern Rome", *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 18 (1987), pp. 173–189; ead., *Civic Politics in the Rome of Urban VIII* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 228–253; John M. Hunt, "Violence and Disorder in the *Sede Vacante* of Early Modern Rome, 1559–1655" (PhD thesis, Ohio State University, 2009).

7 For rumours of the deaths of the long-lived monarchs Henry VIII and Elizabeth I in sixteenth-century England, see Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*, pp. 357–360.

8 For Paul IV and Clement VIII, see Ludwig von Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, 40 vols (London: Kegan Paul, 1891–1953; hereafter *HOP*), vol. 14, p. 413; vol. 24, pp. 432–434. For Sixtus V, see Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (hereafter BAV), Urbinate Latina (hereafter Urb.lat) 1058, *avvisi* of 11 and 25 August 1590, fols 407<sup>r</sup> and 428<sup>r</sup>.

inspired false reports of his death. Newsletter writers and ambassadors wrote about the rumours surrounding Innocent X's poor health and several tumbles he took throughout 1654. This discussion gave rise to the belief that he had died in early January 1655 – just days before his actual death – and inspired papal servants to steal the ill pope's household possessions, including his favorite soup bowl. The servants eagerly anticipated taking part in a venerable tradition of pillaging the household possessions of the dead pontiff.<sup>9</sup>

Eager for the freedoms of the *sede vacante*, Romans were astute observers of the pope's daily activities. His failure to perform his duties as the supreme pontiff and bishop of Rome were tell-tale signs of his imminent death. Pius V was so feeble for much of early 1572 that he could not say mass on Sundays, provoking rumours of his approaching death (which actually occurred on the first of May of that year).<sup>10</sup> The gentleman diarist Giacinto Gigli recorded every illness that beset Innocent X, noting in particular when the pope failed to meet the newly elected officials of the Popolo Romano in August 1651 and, later, when he holed himself up in the papal palace at the Quirinal Hill for the entire month of August 1654. These events provoked rumours and whispered murmurs among the people.<sup>11</sup>

Failing to perform sacred duties on important feast days was particularly disconcerting to the city. In 1622 rumours raced through Rome when poor health forced Gregory XV to skip the bestowal of dowries to poor girls that took place every Annunciation at Santa Maria sopra Minerva. Likewise, Gigli recorded that the people read signs of Urban VIII's coming death when he did not attend to his ceremonial duties on Ascension and Corpus Christi in 1643.<sup>12</sup>

Many ill popes sought to hide their poor health by continuing to perform their sacred duties as the Vicar of Christ. Both Paul IV and Pius IV, despite their

9 Archivio di Stato di Venezia (hereafter ASVe), Dispacci degli ambasciatori al senato, Roma, filza 136, dispatch of 5 January 1655, fols 605<sup>v</sup>-606<sup>r</sup>. For another example of observers concluding that the pope was near to his death, see the anonymous conclave report translated into English, *The Last Conclave* (London: Stephen Bulkley for Henry Seile, 1642), wherein the author writes "In the beginning of the year 1623 the indisposition of the Pope [Gregory XV] was so apparent that all men did foresee that it would not belong before the Roman court received a change in the government," sig. A6<sup>v</sup>. On ritual pillages, see Carlo Ginzburg, "Ritual Pillages: A Preface to Research" in Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero (eds.), *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), pp. 20–41.

10 Pastor, *HOP*, vol. 18, p. 455.

11 Giacinto Gigli, *Diario di Roma*, ed. Manlio Barberito, 2 vols (Rome: Colombo, 1994), vol. 2, pp. 636, 712.

12 Gigli, *Diario*, vol. 1, pp. 102, 308.

fragilities, performed their duties until their deaths. Pius IV, although weak throughout much of 1565, still managed to celebrate Easter mass at St. Peter's. The Tuscan ambassador Ugolino Grifoni reported that Pius "sang it with a voice so clear and sonorous that he put to shame Cardinal Vitelli," who had assisted him during the mass.<sup>13</sup> Despite this subterfuge, rumours swirled about Pius's health and death for the rest of the year. Pasquinades – handwritten invectives – appeared on the ancient statue, Pasquino, and throughout the streets and squares, mocking Pius's attempts to hide his illness. One wondered:

Has he died or has he not? Has he grown worse?  
Is he getting worse or not?  
Now he has gotten better.  
He has lost his speech. Now he has lost the use of arms.<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, Gregory XIII tried to conceal his long illness of 1581, but his condition became so serious that he could not carry out his sacred functions for much of the year, causing excitement about his certain death.<sup>15</sup> In January 1644, several months before his death, Urban VIII attempted to keep his ailing health a secret, but rumours of his death were so rampant that the conservators of the Popolo Romano locked and fortified the windows and doors of their palace where the statue of the much-hated Barberini pope was kept. They took these actions "to ward off any disorder that could happen."<sup>16</sup> They were seeking to

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- 13 Pastor, *HOP*, vol. 14, p. 413; vol. 16, p. 398. For Pius IV and Cardinal Vitellozzo Vitelli, see Medici Archive Project, <http://documents.medici.org>; Archivio di Stato di Firenze (hereafter ASF), Carteggio universale, vol 515, letter of 23 April 1565, fol. 376<sup>r</sup>.
  - 14 Valerio Marucci, Antonio Marzo, and Angelo Romano (eds.), *Pasquinate romane nel Cinquecento* (Rome: Salerno, 1982), no. 722, p. 931. The fluctuating health of Alexander VII during the last year of his pontificate (1667) inspired similar pasquinades; see Gregorio Leti, *Il Sindacato di Alessandro VII* (s.l., 1667), pp. 55–58. For example, Leti copied this pasquinade into his account of Alexander's death: "Is the pope dead? Is he alive? | God keeps him for a hundred hours | The Pope as our lord | He has his life and his death in his hand [...] | To trick the Christian people by always being moribund, and never dying."
  - 15 BAV, Urb.lat 1049, *avviso* of 16 April 1581, fol. 324<sup>r</sup>. Gregory XIII recovered later that year, but remained in poor health throughout his pontificate, which lasted until 1585. See Pastor for continual concerns over his health, *HOP*, vol. 20, p. 633. For concerns about the pope's health in anticipation of a trip to Bologna and the possibility of his death while he was away from Rome, see BAV, Urb.lat 1052, *avvisi* of 14 and 18 January 1584, fols 17<sup>r-r</sup>, 21<sup>r</sup>.
  - 16 Gigli, *Diario*, vol. 1, p. 412. Gigli also recorded that Innocent X "kept hidden" his ill health, even among members of his court, by attending a consistory on 16 March 1654; see vol. 2, p. 702.

prevent a crowd of angry Romans from assaulting the statue in vengeance for his high taxes on bread and wine.

Popes frequently made public appearances to quell rumours of their deaths. In November 1602, Clement VIII appeared at the balcony of the Vatican palace to give the people a show of his good health.<sup>17</sup> But these demonstrations often backfired, spurring even more gossip and rumour. On 27 March 1644, Urban VIII attempted to give an Easter benediction from a window overlooking St. Peter's Square rather than the customary location, the portico of the church. It was rumoured that Urban was so weak that when servants dressed the pope for the occasion, "it was necessary to unstitch the sleeves of his gown and throw it over him without moving his arms" for fear that the ordeal might kill him.<sup>18</sup> The servants had to prop up the pope as he gave his benediction – a sight that did not instill confidence in the people.

Omens could also give rise to rumours among Romans, who were always looking for signs of the pope's death. Despite Paul IV's attempts to keep his dropsy a secret during the summer of 1559, news of illness reached the populace, and by 17 June a rumour – one of many that summer – spread of his death. The appearance of a comet that night over the Vatican further convinced the city that he had died.<sup>19</sup> A similar episode occurred near the end of Pius IV's pontificate. Although he performed his ceremonial and sacred duties throughout the year, his fragility became apparent to the people, who believed that he would not see the New Year. This rumour gained support because on 2 December 1565, the first Sunday of Advent, a candle nearest to the papal throne went out twice for no apparent reason.<sup>20</sup>

Sixtus V attracted a deluge of omens as he neared death. The Savoyard ambassador Carlo Muti reported that the papal court talked of a black bird that appeared at the pope's windowsill as he lay on his deathbed, and only flew away after the pope had died. At the same time, the clear day suddenly turned stormy, casting the sky with lightning as the pope approached death. At the hour of Sixtus's death a lightning bolt supposedly struck his family's coat-of-arms that had been placed above the entrance of the Jewish ghetto.

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17 Pastor, *HOP*, vol. 24, p. 432.

18 Gigli, *Diario*, vol. 1, p. 414.

19 BAV, Urb.lat 1039, *avviso* of 17 June 1559, fol. 49<sup>r</sup>. See also Pastor, *HOP*, vol. 14, pp. 411–413. An *avviso* of 8 July 1559 gave Paul IV two weeks to live and noted that the city and court were abuzz with talk of upcoming conclave; see BAV, Urb.lat 1039, fol. 58<sup>v</sup>. A solar eclipse supposedly foretold Innocent IX's death after a long illness on 20 December 1591; see BAV, Urb.lat 1060, *avviso* of 1 January 1592, fol. 2<sup>v</sup>.

20 Pastor, *HOP*, vol. 26, pp. 398–399.



The ambassador wrote that immediately there arose "such a discourse among the people who accorded the events so many sinister interpretations."<sup>21</sup>

Urban VIII's long pontificate engendered many rumours based on omens and on astrologers' predictions of his death. A lunar eclipse of January 1628 and solar eclipses of December 1628 and January 1630, supported by the prognostications of astrologers, all generated rumours of his death. Urban, an affirmed believer in the efficacy of astrology and the malefic effects of the stars on human health and state affairs, had recourse to the counter-magic of the magus Tommaso Campanella.<sup>22</sup>

As the example of Urban VIII reveals, prognostications of the pope's death were quite common and sparked rumours in the city and court.<sup>23</sup> In 1581, amid rumours and concerns about Gregory XIII's health, an astrologer predicted that the pope would die on October 16 – a prediction that ultimately proved false as Gregory lived until 1585. Nevertheless it fueled further rumours.<sup>24</sup> Although Clement VIII enjoyed good health in 1599, astrologers prophesied his death that year, prompting many to believe them.<sup>25</sup> More than forty years later, during the severe flooding of the Tiber in December 1647, inquisitors jailed an astrologer for predicting that once the flood waters receded, Innocent X, who was suffering from gallstones, would die. The prognostications were most likely prompted by political factors since many Romans felt Innocent had failed to respond adequately to the famine that struck the city that year.<sup>26</sup>

The rumours that astrology engendered could be felt beyond Rome. In May 1630, Orazio Morandi, a Vallombrosan abbot in Rome, prophesied that Urban would die from the harmful celestial influences of a solar eclipse. Newsletter writers immediately picked up on Morandi's prognostication. Soon it was disseminating not only throughout the streets of Rome by word of mouth, but eventually throughout Italy and beyond the Alps via newsletters. Other astrologers started predicting Urban's death as Morandi's prophecy became known. The false news of Urban's death acquired so much credence

21 Archivio di Stato di Torino, Carteggio diplomatico, mazzo 11, no. 189, dispatch of 31 July 1590.

22 Daniel P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 2000 [1959]), pp. 205–207.

23 On prophecy and prognostications in early modern Italy, see Ottavia Niccoli, *Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

24 Pastor, *HOP*, vol. 20, p. 633.

25 Pastor, *HOP*, vol. 24, p. 431.

26 Gigli, *Diario*, vol. 2, p. 509.

through handwritten and printed *avvisi* that Spanish and German cardinals outside of Rome made ready to travel to the conclave to take part in the papal election.<sup>27</sup>

Papal relatives and officials concerned themselves with keeping the details of the pope's health a state secret because they knew a mere rumour of the pope's death could stir disorder in Rome, as Romans eagerly anticipated the license that ensued with the onset of the *sede vacante*. For example, when Pius IV was rumoured to have died during the night of 6 December 1565, the city erupted in a spate of violence associated with *sede vacante* and its vendettas. A few criminals even escaped as papal police were transferring murderers and other hardened prisoners from the city's jails to Castel Sant'Angelo.<sup>28</sup>

Papal authorities also feared the ritual looting that often took place in the wake of the pope's death. When rumours spread throughout the city that Sixtus V had died on 11 July 1590, the Jewish vendors who were gathered at the Wednesday market in Piazza Navona "gathered their goods and fled toward the ghetto to save themselves from pillaging," which in turn only "gave rise to a rumour that the pope had died." The incident caused many to flee from the streets and to lock their palaces out of fear of pillaging and violence.<sup>29</sup> Later that week, the ailing Sixtus left the palace on the Quirinal Hill to say mass "in order to allow himself to be seen" by the people.<sup>30</sup> The Governor of Rome had several Jews imprisoned and tortured for sparking the rumour. A little more than a year later, the Jewish merchants fled the market at the Banchi on 15 September 1591, "retreating to their *seraglio* due to a certain rumour that ran

27 The rumours provoked by Morandi's prophecy sparked "many discussions in writing that dealt with the election of the new pope as if it were *sede vacante*," which then caused the Spanish and German cardinals to prepare for their journeys to Rome. See an *avviso* of 18 May 1630 in the appendix of Luigi Amabile, *Fra Tommaso Campanella, la sua congiura, i suoi processi e la sua pazzia*, 3 vols (Naples: Morano, 1882), vol. 2, p. 149. See also Brendan Dooley, *Morandi's Last Prophecy and the End of Renaissance Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

28 BAV, Urb.lat 1040, *avviso* of 9 December 1565, fols 148<sup>v</sup>.

29 BAV, Urb.lat 1058, *avviso* of 21 July 1590, fol. 382<sup>r</sup>. Another *avviso* of 14 July 1590 stated that the Jews "who found themselves in the market of Piazza Navona, fearing that they might be pillaged, suddenly boxed up their merchandise, returning in a hurry to the Ghetto on account of a rumour that spread among them concerning the pope's death" – see BAV, Urb.lat 1058, fol. 356<sup>r</sup>. On the pillages that took place after the pope's death, see Carlo Ginzburg, "Ritual Pillages" in Muir and Ruggiero (eds.), *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe*, pp. 20–41.

30 BAV, Urb.lat 1058, *avviso* of 21 July 1590, fol. 382<sup>v</sup>.

among the people concerning the interregnum.”<sup>31</sup> The rumour started as public talk centring on a conjunction of events: Gregory XIV's moribund condition and the condemnation of six prisoners to death, which signaled to the populace that the pope's end was near.<sup>32</sup> Generally the most nefarious criminals were either sent to the highly fortified dungeons of Castel Sant'Angelo or were executed, before the general pardon of minor criminals – petty thieves and debtors – that occurred at the pope's death. Evidently, the people read into the executions that Gregory had died. Gregory, however, lived for another three weeks, during which time daily rumours of his death kept the city in a constant state of anxiety. During this time, seven hundred bandits from the Marches and Abruzzo descended upon the Roman countryside. The leader of one of these bands of brigands claimed that that his group “had heard of the pope's desperate health and during the *sede vacante* they wanted to try their luck and see what they could do.”<sup>33</sup> They specifically expressed a desire to pillage the property of the Roman Jews.

The circulation of rumours and false news could also inspire rebellion among the civic magistrates – the Popolo Romano – who always eagerly anticipated the *sede vacante* as an opportunity to exercise unaccustomed power with the cessation of papal law and the acquirement of new jurisdictional authority. False reports of Gregory XIV's death prompted the recently elected conservators and *caporioni* (leaders of the civic watch) to rush to the Capitoline to attend the general council where important decisions regarding the regulation of the city during the interregnum would be decided. The cardinal chamberlain Enrico Caetani had to give word to the magistrates that the pope was still alive.<sup>34</sup>

This desire for power infected all the officials of the Popolo Romano. In 1605, amid rumours of Clement VIII's death, a newsletter reported that:

such is the desire of some, both the wicked and the foolish, that His Holiness be finished, and so it seems that among these was the *caporione*

31 BAV, Urb.lat 1509, pt. II, *avviso* of 28 September 1591, fol. 275<sup>r</sup>. Roman writers often used *seraglio*, meaning an enclosure, interchangeably with ghetto to refer the enclosed quarter of the Jews.

32 An *avviso* of 25 September 1591 reported that “This evening in Banchi there was a great racket among the Jews who fled in a hurry, speaking of the pope's death” – see BAV, Urb.lat 1059, pt. II, fol. 272<sup>r</sup>. Banchi was the financial district of Rome, located on the eastern bank of the Tiber River, near the Ponte Sant'Angelo.

33 BAV, Urb.lat 1059, pt. II, *avviso* of 9 October 1591, fol. 303<sup>v</sup>.

34 BAV, Urb.lat 1059, pt. II, *avviso* of 2 October 1591, fols 289<sup>v</sup>-290<sup>r</sup>.

of Campo Marzo, who pulled out the standard [of his *rione*, or quarter], as if it were *sede vacante*.<sup>35</sup>

Similarly, the day after Paul V fell sick on 15 January 1621, rumour spread through Rome that he had died of a stroke. Gigli wrote that:

the following morning [...] the entire city was stirred up, and the *caporioni* opened all the prisons and freed those that were there for civil matters [...] and the people began to make a ruckus as if it were *sede vacante*.<sup>36</sup>

Gigli, the *caporioni* of Campitelli, knew well that the Popolo Romano and, in particular, the *caporioni* cherished this right to administer power and patronage as the ones to open the prisons at the onset of the pope's death.

Rumours could feed the wishful thinking on the part of the officials of the Popolo Romano. In 1559, after hearing rumours of the death of Paul IV, a stern pope whose policies had alienated the populace, the magistrates assembled in the Palace of the Conservators where they:

after having said a thousand evils against the pope, resolved to bust open all the prisons and, in particular, Ripetta, that is the prison of the Inquisition.<sup>37</sup>

By venerable and unwritten custom, the Popolo Romano had the right to free all debtors and criminals in civil matters imprisoned in the city's main jails – the Tor di Nona, the Corte Savella, the Borgo, and the Capitoline prison. However, not only did the magistrates use the rumour of the pope's death to claim their traditional right, they also took the unprecedented step of freeing heretics condemned in the dungeons of the Inquisition. Nevertheless, they were true Catholics, having the heretics swear upon their release to live according to the doctrines of the Church. Thus, their actions were motivated by power more than by any sympathy for Protestantism. The Inquisition was an institution associated with Paul IV; as a cardinal he had directed its activities with unrestrained energy and enthusiasm. The actions of the magistrates sparked

35 BAV, Urb.lat 1073, *avviso* of 26 February 1605, fols 90<sup>r-v</sup>.

36 Gigli, *Diario*, vol. 1, p. 80.

37 BAV, Barbarini Latini 5243, "Diario di Vincenzo Belli," fol. 161<sup>v</sup>. See also BAV, Urb.lat 1039, *avviso* of 21 August 1559, fol. 73<sup>r</sup>. The prisons of the Inquisition were located on via Ripetta, the street leading to one of Rome's two river ports.

further rumour of the pope's death, prompting the people of Rome to sack the warehouses and prisons of the Inquisition.<sup>38</sup>

The very actions that the pope, his family, and his government took to prepare for the coming *sede vacante*, only contributed to the birth of rumour and confusion. As Pius IV lay indisposed in bed, the cardinal-nephew and the governor of Rome had the city gates locked to keep bandits and assassins from entering the city. Because of this preventive measure, the people "took it that [Pius] was dead."<sup>39</sup> The introduction of troops, stationed at the gates to protect the city and at the conclave, was also seen as a sign that the pontiff was near death or had died. For example, a newsletter of 23 February 1605 reported that Clement VIII:

was about to die because another company of Corsican soldiers, who were outside [the city], was ordered into Rome, and on Monday additional weapons [...] were extracted from Castel Sant'Angelo to arm them. In addition, Cardinal San Giorgio had closed and walled up some of the spaces in the Palace of Alessandro where he stays in the summer.<sup>40</sup>

Two weeks later, another newsletter observed that Clement's family – the Aldobrandini – had placed guards at the palace of the pope's niece and at their villa in Frascati, which its writer concluded was a "bad sign."<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, the pope's family had their valuables removed from the villa, "just as is done during *sede vacante*," a reference to the pillaging that sometimes accompanied a pope's death.<sup>42</sup> These were necessary precautions because bandits from Abruzzo – getting wind of rumours of Clement's death – had marched toward Frascati and its environs with the hope of plundering the villa.

The preparations of cardinals to protect their palaces from ritual pillages were also signs of the pope's death. The Tuscan ambassador Curtio Picchera noted amid the rumours of Gregory XV's death that the Cardinal of Savoy had hired a mercenary captain from the Città di Castello with a hundred soldiers to

38 BAV, Barb.lat 5243, "Diario di Vincenzo Belli," fols 161<sup>v</sup>–62<sup>r</sup> and BAV, Urb.lat 1039, *avviso* of 19 August 1559, fol. 71<sup>r</sup>.

39 BAV, Urb.lat 1040, *avviso* of 9 December 1565, fols 148<sup>r-v</sup>.

40 BAV, Urb.lat 1073, *avviso* of 23 February 1605, fol. 86<sup>v</sup>. Cardinal San Giorgio refers to Cinzio Aldobrandini, the nephew of Clement VIII.

41 BAV, Urb.lat 1073, *avvisi* of 2 and 5 March 1605, fols 97<sup>r</sup>, 124<sup>r</sup>.

42 BAV, Urb.lat 1073, *avviso* of 23 February 1605, fol. 86<sup>v</sup>.

watch his palace at Monte Giordano.<sup>43</sup> The Dutch newsletter writer and émigré, Teodoro Ameyden, cited Cardinal Mario Theodoli's sudden recourse to armed men to guard his palace and person as proof of Urban VIII's impending death on 29 July 1644.<sup>44</sup>

The most visible sign of the pope's approaching death was the Governor of Rome's transference of the "most important prisoners" – the oft-used phrase of official reports and newsletters – from the city's many jails to the iron-tight dungeons of Castel Sant'Angelo.<sup>45</sup> This euphemism meant not only dangerous prisoners such as bandits and murderers, but those guilty of capital crimes (such as forgery and treason) and heresy. The governor had these prisoners moved to Sant'Angelo because the Popolo Romano exercised the right to open the four main prisons of the city, freeing all those held for petty offenses (theft, gambling, and debt).

The decision to have the prisoners transferred, generally made by the cardinal-nephew, was a difficult one to make since suspicions were quickly roused once the populace saw the procession of shackled prisoners making its way in the dead of night to Castel Sant'Angelo. It was made only once the pope's condition was considered hopeless. Nevertheless, it was one that the cardinal-nephews and papal officials agonized over, delayed, and kept secret.

43 ASF, Archivio mediceo del principato 3338, dispatch of 7 July 1623, fol. 466<sup>r</sup>. See also Picchera's hasty letters concerning Gregory's health in early July; dispatches of 3 and 4 July 1623, fols 445<sup>r</sup>, 463<sup>r</sup>.

44 Biblioteca Casantense, cod. 1832, "Diario della città e corte di Roma notato da Deone hora temi Dio," fol. 102<sup>r</sup>. On the ritual pillages, see footnote 27. On the defenses of cardinals against the pillages, see John M. Hunt, "Violence and Disorder in the *Sede Vacante*," pp. 122–172. The cardinals fortified their homes against looting after the pope died, but also in case a rumour arose from the conclave that one of them had been elected pope. Romans claimed a customary right to pillage the pope-elect's palace.

45 For the prisons of Rome, see Antonio Bertolotti, *Le prigioni di Roma nei secoli XVI, XVII e XVIII* (Rome, 1890). For the Tor di Nona, see Alberto Cametti, "La torre di Nona e la contrada circostante dal medio evo al secolo XVII", *Archivio della società romana di storia patria*, 39 (1916), pp. 411–466. For the prisons of the Corte Savella, see Niccolò Del Re, *Il maresciallo di Santa Romana Chiesa* (Rome: Istituto di studi romani, 1962), pp. 30–33. For the Capitoline prisons, see Emmanuel Rodocanachi, *The Roman Capitol in Ancient and Modern Times*, trans. Frederick Lawton (London: William Heinemann, 1906), pp. 106, 160–166. For the jails of the Governor of Borgo, see Niccolò Del Re, "Il governatore di Borgo", *Studi romani* 11 (1963), pp. 21–22. For the dungeons of Castel Sant'Angelo, see Emmanuel Rodocanachi, *Le château Saint-Ange* (Paris: Hachette, 1909). The prisons of the Tor di Nona were located near the north bend of the Tiber River. Those of the Corte Savella were located at the western end of the Via Giulia, and those of Borgo near Santa Maria Traspontina, outside the Vatican.

For example, the cardinal-nephew of Clement VIII waited until his uncle suffered a stroke before having the serious prisoners removed the next day to the secure jails of Castel Sant'Angelo.<sup>46</sup> Eighteen years later the family of Gregory XV attempted to hide his protracted illness. However, once he neared death, a newsletter reported that "already the house Ludovisi was seen in mourning and the prisoners had been sent to Castel Sant'Angelo in great numbers," and that "two squadrons of Corsican soldiers were present at the palace of the Ludovisi."<sup>47</sup>

Confusion could reign during this transitional phase. The Pamphili family had the prisoners moved to Castel Sant'Angelo after Innocent X, suffering from bladder problems and developing a fever, "was held dangerously close to death."<sup>48</sup> Innocent lived for another four years, but the prisoners' transfer sparked rumours of his death and resulted in a spate of violence among the populace. Thus papal families typically waited until the last minute to make this decision to avoid confusing the populace and spreading rumours. When the Governor of Rome asked Cesare Facchinetti – the cardinal-nephew of the ailing Innocent IX – about moving the prisoners of importance in January 1592, Facchinetti responded that "Innocent was in good condition" and that "it would be far worse if his condition were made public."<sup>49</sup> The decision was delayed, and Innocent died a few days later before the prisoners could be moved, which caused even more chaos when hardened criminals escaped as the *caporioni* opened the city's jails.

Newsletters facilitated the dissemination of observations from the court and the rumours from the streets, not only in Rome but throughout all of Italy and Europe. Even old rumours traveled beyond Rome in *avvisi* and sometimes

46 BAV, Urb.lat 1073, *avviso* of 5 March 1605, fol. 123<sup>v</sup>.

47 BAV, Urb.lat 1093, undated *avviso*, fols 524<sup>rv</sup>. For other examples, see BAV, Urb.lat 1059, pt. II, *avviso* of 5 October 1591, fol. 300<sup>r</sup>: "other prisoners were transported to Castello on the occasion of the illness of the pope." Gregory XIV had been ill for most of his pontificate. Since he grew increasingly feeble in the autumn of 1591, his cardinal-nephew Emilio Sfondrati had the nefarious criminals moved to the papal dungeons almost two weeks before his death on 16 October. When Urban VIII, who had been ill with dysentery and catarrh, grew worse on the morning of 27 July 1644, his cardinal-nephew Francesco Barberini ordered the prisoners removed to Castel Sant'Angelo two evenings later. See Archivio Vaticano Segreto, Segretario di Stato, Avvisi di Roma, t. 96, *avviso* of 30 July 1644, fol. 203<sup>r</sup> and ASVe, Dispacchi, Rome, filza 121, dispatch of 30 July 1644, fol. 44<sup>r</sup>.

48 Gigli, *Diario*, vol. 2, p. 632. The cardinal-nephew, Camillo Pamphili, also had a million *scudi* and other treasures moved from the papal palace on Quirinal to the family palace in Piazza Navona (perhaps from a fear of looting).

49 BAV, Urb.lat 1060, *avviso* of 1 January 1592, fol. 2<sup>r</sup>.

in printed form, as the prophecies of Orazio Morandi demonstrate. Papal authorities attempted to curtail the activities of the newsletter writers, particularly those who wrote on sensitive political information centring on the papal court and policy, including the pope's health, always a major concern for the powers of Italy and Europe. In 1571 Pius V had several newsletter writers arrested and some even hanged. A year later he promulgated the constitution *Contra scribentes, exemplantes et dictantes monita vulgo dicta gli avvisi e ritorni*, which banned writings that defamed the pope and other prominent men or that spread rumours and predictions of the pope's death. Pius V's successors renewed these bans, which forced many newsletter writers to produce more clandestine news pieces called *avvisi secreti* whose contents nonetheless became known to a greater public. All papal officials could do was to make examples of the few newsletter writers who happened to fall into their grasp.<sup>50</sup> For example, the Governor of Rome sentenced the newsletter writer known as Luperzio to life imprisonment after he spread the news of Gregory XIII's poor health in 1581.<sup>51</sup>

Popes hounded astrologers as well. On 15 July 1630, Urban VIII, both frightened and angered by the whirlwind of predictions concerning his death, had Morandi and other astrologers arrested and jailed. Gigli noted that Urban had singled out Morandi, who had "written discourses and letters, which blasphemed the eminence of the title given to the pope by the cardinals and sent them to various places."<sup>52</sup> Yet Urban also sought out other astrologers, as well as the scribes who copied their predictions in the newsletters. A year later, Urban, still roiling from the rumours of his demise, issued the bull *Inscrutabilis*, which forbade the prediction of the deaths of popes and other prelates on the pain of death. Ecclesiastics, like Morandi, who accounted for the majority of astrologers, would lose their clerical status if they made prophecies of any kind concerning the pope.<sup>53</sup>

Despite the efforts of the papacy to silence rumours and their primary disseminators – newsletter writers and astrologers – news of the impending death of the pope, whether true or false, continued to spread among the people. The pope could not stop his subjects from commenting on his health and

50 Infelise, "Roman *Avvisi*," pp. 214–215. The English title of the constitution is "Against writers, copiers and speakers of news called in the vulgar *avvisi e ritorni*."

51 BAV, Urb.lat 1049, *avviso* of 21 October 1581, fol. 399v.

52 Gigli, *Diario*, vol. 1, p. 195. Morandi later died in prison from poisoning, most likely the victim of assassination. See also Dooley, *Morandi's Last Prophecy*, pp. 162–179.

53 Luigi Tomassetti (ed.), *Bullarum, diplomatum et privilegiorum*, t. 14 (Turin: Dalmazzo, 1868), p. 211.



his daily activities. Rumours reflected a desire among Romans of all ranks to shape and control the social and political world around them. Rumours, as sociologist Jean-Noël Kapferer has argued, “convey information, we want to believe. Our desire to believe is sometimes our usual criteria of realism and plausibility.”<sup>54</sup>

Many popes, especially those who imposed excessive taxes or ruled severely, angered the populace enough for it to wish for an end to their reigns. Paul IV, Sixtus V, and Urban VIII stand out as the most extreme examples of this kind of pope. Romans also desired the pope's death because it would initiate the *sede vacante*, a time of license between his death and the election of his successor. Some hoped to profit during the vacancy through burglary, others sought revenge against their enemies and rivals. Merchants and bankers, who wagered on the lengths of pontificates, anticipated windfalls from a successful prediction of a pontiff's death.<sup>55</sup> The Popolo Romano, as we have seen, acquired increased jurisdictional authority during the *sede vacante*.

Boredom, or the desire for change, was also a motive for the populace to anticipate the pope's death. In the case of long pontificates, such as the sixteen-year reign of Paul V, the people, especially those with connections to the papal court, simply desired a new pontificate that would open the doors of patronage to a different set of officials and prelates. Despite Paul V's popularity in Rome for keeping the people fed with bread, Gigli wrote concerning his death that:

In sum he was worthy of reigning much longer for his virtues, even if the mob seemed annoyed with the length of this period [i.e. his reign] for no other reason than it desired new things.<sup>56</sup>

54 Kapferer, *Rumor*, pp. 82–84, 82.

55 The practice had become so prevalent that Gregory XIV banned it along with wagering on papal elections in a bull of 21 March 1591. Gregory XIV issued an Italian translation so that bankers and gamblers could read it; see Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale Library, “Bolla della Santità di N. S. Gregorio PP XIV contra chi fa scommesse sopra la vita & morte ò sopra la futura elettione del Pontefice Romano ò sopra le promotioni dei Cardinali della Santa Chiesa Romana.” For wagering on the election, see John M. Hunt, “The Conclave from the ‘Outside In’: Rumor, Speculation, and Disorder in Rome during Early Modern Papal Elections”, *Journal of Early Modern History*, 16 (2012), pp. 355–382.

56 Gigli, *Diario*, vol. 1, p. 80. After the death of Gregory XV, Gigli remembered the disappointed hope the people had for Paul's successor: “When he assumed the papacy there was an incredible expectation that the people had of him [...]. [The populous], desirous of new things, was annoyed by the length of the pontificate of Paul V. But in the short-time they realized how they had been tricked,” p. 120. Similarly, the Mantuan

At the local level, rumour – whether spread by word of mouth or through newsletters – served to inform Romans of the pope's health and possible death. These rumours had their origins in observations of the pope's daily activities and health. As the health of ailing popes became worse, Romans began to look for the tell-tale signs of their death. These included moving dangerous criminals to the more secure prison of Castel Sant'Angelo, preparing the city for the violence of the *sede vacante*, and fortifying family palaces and holdings. This information was best conveyed – while it was fresh – through rumour and newsletters. Even without papal censorship, by the time the news made it to print, it would have been old news, verified by events at the papal court and in the city. News was best spread in Rome through oral channels, although stimulated by visual and often ritual cues.

Rumours of the pope's death fulfilled several desires of the Roman people. They were a form of political discourse in which Romans commented on the policies of the reigning pope.<sup>57</sup> But more than that, rumours reflected the eagerness of the city for the *sede vacante*, during which all sorts of social and political agenda, ranging from personal vengeance to protests against dead popes, could be executed. Whatever their origin or the motives behind them, rumours allowed many of those barred from the halls of power to voice their opinion and in some cases allowed them to shape the world around them. In this regard, rumours served as one example of the many “weapons of the weak” outlined by James C. Scott in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*.<sup>58</sup> The power of rumour can be seen in the fear it instilled in papal authorities and in their efforts to stifle the spread of reports of the pope's ill health and death.

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ambassador Giovanni Battista Tarabucci noted in a dispatch of 20 May 1643 that, after twenty years of Urban VIII's pontificate, Romans “were eager for change,” see Pastor, *HOP*, vol. 28, p. 402.

57 Ethan H. Shagan, “Rumors and Popular Politics in the Reign of Henry VIII” in Tim Harris (ed.), *The Politics of the Excluded, c. 1500–1800* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 39–66.

58 Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p. 147.

## “A True Reporte”

*News and the Neighbourhood in Early Modern Domestic Murder Texts*

*Emma Whipday*

A woman here lieth dedde on grounde,  
 God knoweth here I dead have her found,  
 Drawe nere and see her deadly wounde,  
 Whiche grevous is to me:  
 Beholde he saied, and cried faste,  
 She is out of a windowe caste,  
 The people then in all the haste,  
 Drewe nere that facte to see.

D.S., *A True Reporte or Description of an Horrible, Wofull, and Moste Lamentable Murther* (London: Henry Kirkham, 1573), sig. A2<sup>r</sup>.

The 1573 murder pamphlet *A True Reporte* opens with the narrator pamphleteer asleep in his bed on a windy night. He is woken by a cry from outside; his neighbour has discovered a woman lying dead in the street. Our narrator rises to view the gory sight, and finds that the corpse has been thrown from the window of a nearby house. It is soon decided by the assembled crowd that the wounds inflicted upon the body must be the work of the woman's husband, with whom she was seen, “merrie,” earlier that evening.<sup>1</sup> The narrator calls for the husband, but receiving no answer, bangs upon his door until he comes forth. Confronted with the body of his wife, and then taken to the sheriff, and finally to jail, the husband, John Kynnestar, confesses to the crime, a confession our narrator ventriloquizes. Kynnestar is judged guilty of the murder, and executed.

The nameless narrator is thus embroiled in the aftermath of domestic murder: he views the evidence of the crime, apprehends the criminal, and hears his confession. Yet there is no suggestion that he is a constable, or in any way affiliated with the law. His only role is that of neighbour. Through this role, he takes responsibility for setting in motion the legal processes of criminal justice.

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1 D.S., *A True Reporte or Description of an Horrible, Wofull, and Moste Lamentable Murther* (London: Henry Kirkham, 1573), sig. A4<sup>r</sup>.

This chapter traces the figurations of neighbourhood involvement in the detection of domestic crime, as represented in early modern news pamphlets and broadside ballads. I explore the extent to which household privacy is constructed as contingent upon legal and moral conformity; the circumstances in which communal surveillance is mandated as a neighbourhood responsibility; and the ways in which neighbours motivated by self-interest and prurient curiosity are assimilated into providential narratives. In so doing, I argue that these texts use the ideal of the scrutinizing neighbourhood to contain the disruptive potential inherent in disseminating news of domestic murder.

A *True Reporte* defines itself as a 'news' text, conveying details of a true, recent, and disturbing murder to the reading public. The title page gives the expected details of the crime, including the name of the criminal, his relationship to the victim, the city in which the crime occurred, and the relevant dates. Furthermore, it claims the pamphlet has been published within six months of both crime and execution, thus signalling the text's temporal proximity to the crime to the pamphlet's potential purchasers. The text is verified by both the reported experience of the narrator and a list of local witnesses who agree that "this is true."<sup>2</sup>

Named witnesses who can corroborate the pamphleteer's account commonly feature in murder pamphlets, for example, *The Manner of the Cruell Outragious Murther of William Storre* (1603) ends with four testimonies, each signed by many names, confirming the good character of the murdered man. Those pamphleteers who cannot claim personal knowledge of the crime signal their veracity through emphasizing aural and visual proximity to its consequences. Thomas Cooper describes himself as an "eare-witnesse" of a murder in Suffolk, having been present at the assize trial,<sup>3</sup> whilst the author of *Newes Out of Germanie* is anxious to assure the reader that he "not only heard the murderers examination, but was also an eye witnesse of his death."<sup>4</sup> In both cases, the pamphleteer establishes the 'truth' of his account not through evidence of the events themselves, but through the legal apparatus of condemnation and execution: he trusts his eyes and ears only so far as they relay the accounts and judgements of the trial.

In contrast, *A True Reporte* concerns itself with creating an atmosphere of verisimilitude and authenticity apart from the legal apparatus of the crime.

2 Ibid., sig. A1<sup>v</sup>.

3 Thomas Cooper, *The Cry and Revenge of Blood Expressing the Nature and Haynousnesse of Wilfull Murther* (London: Nicholas Okes for John Wright, 1620), p. 3.

4 Anon., *Newes Out of Germanie, A Most Wonderfull and True Discourse of a Cruell Murderer* (Ipswich: George Pen, 1584), sig. A2<sup>r</sup>.

Despite being presented within the paratexts of a news pamphlet, the text itself is closer in form to a broadside ballad; it is written in verse, and has an unnamed narrator who is a participant in the action rather than a mere observer. In claiming to relay the words – rendered in verse but recorded in substance – of witnesses and murderer in the immediate aftermath of the crime, this generically hybrid text provides an example of the ways in which news pamphlets legitimated their “true report[s]” not only through eyewitness accounts of executions and “eare-witnesse” reports of trials, but through recording the witnessing of the crime’s antecedents and aftermath by the neighbours of criminal and victim. The text proper maintains the conventions of early modern murder texts in recounting a bloody and disturbing murder within a narrative framework of detection, judgement, and punishment; a framework which relies upon the surveillance, witnessing, and shared responsibility of the surrounding neighbourhood.

In *The Antichrist’s Lewd Hat*, Peter Lake explores the extent to which murder pamphlets simultaneously induced disorder, through describing titillating acts of sex and violence, and “controlled and contained” these disorderly elements, in representing the trial, confession, and punishment of the criminal.<sup>5</sup> He argues that the pamphlets derived their popularity both from their sensationalized accounts of disruptive behaviour, which enact communal fantasies of subversion and disobedience, and their containment of this behaviour within conventional narratives of state justice. The texts at once allow the reader to collude with forbidden behaviour, and to judge such behaviour from a safe and comfortable distance.

By examining the portrayal of neighbourhood surveillance in news pamphlets and ballads, this chapter explores the construction of neighbourhood as a moral force that complements the legal process of trial, confession, and punishment. In so doing, it suggests that the figure of the neighbour is aligned with that of the reader: encouraged at once vicariously to experience domestic disorder, and to judge it. Domestic crime violated the order of the household and the laws of the state, and thus justified opening up the private home to the public gaze of the community.

As Lena Cowen Orlin argues in *Locating Privacy in Tudor London*, there was little privacy in an early modern home: the social forces of “public policing” – in which the community provided a public moral system to complement private conscience – and neighbourly curiosity, often ended in the ecclesiastical courts, ensuring that the home remained subject to the communal and state

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5 Peter Lake, with Michael Questier, *The Antichrist’s Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), p. xiv.

forces that surrounded it.<sup>6</sup> The household only retained its private authority as long as it remained subject to public laws, moral as well as legal. Elizabeth Mazzola and Corrine S. Abate term early modern homes “arenas of surveillance,” both because those within the home could view those outside, and because those without could scrutinize the comings and goings of those within.<sup>7</sup> Yet the phrase “arenas of surveillance” is misleading because it connotes an invasion of privacy that would be understood today as encroaching upon the freedom of the individual. As Cynthia Herrup argues, the nature of criminal law in the period rendered the “vigilance” of the neighbourhood, not an invasion of privacy, but “a communal obligation.”<sup>8</sup> In early modern news pamphlets and ballads, this vigilant surveillance is represented as positive and necessary, sanctioned by law, and enabled by God.

### “Cause people should her see”: Neighbourly Behaviour

*A True Reporte* depends upon both a neighbourhood witnessing discord in the liminal spaces of the home, and a narrator neighbour who detects domestic crime and brings the criminal to judgement. As a newsworthy murder account, it rests on the currency of the witnessing neighbours as a signifier of truth. Yet the narrative also depends upon the significance of the concept of neighbourhood for the criminal himself.

In this text, a marital murder takes place in a bedchamber of a house. The husband, John Kynnestar, murders his (unnamed) wife upon their bed, then throws her from the bed and attempts to sleep. Deciding that he is unable to do so, he casts the body of his wife from the window. Soon after, his neighbours knock at his door. Much of this appears surprising, even inexplicable. That Kynnestar, having spent a “merrie” evening with his wife, should hear the voice of the devil instructing him to stab her, and obey it, is never explained within the text. That Kynnestar should throw the corpse of his wife out of the window, without making any attempt to conceal it or dispose of it, is more unexpected still. Yet the reason that he gives for this is yet more surprising: “cause people

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6 Lena Cowen Orlin, *Locating Privacy in Tudor London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 10.

7 Elizabeth Mazzola and Corrine S. Abate (eds.), *Privacy, Domesticity and Women in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), introduction, p. 4.

8 Cynthia B. Herrup, *The Common Peace: Participation and the Criminal Law in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 70.

should her see."<sup>9</sup> Kynnestar defenestrates the body of his victim so that the surrounding community may bear witness to his crime.

Thus despite the fact that Kynnestar initially feels no sorrow at his crime, he is aware that his actions must have consequences. Yet he does not situate his act within the parameters of the legal system; it is the narrator, not the subject, of the text who forges a relationship, begun in the jail and ended at the gallows, between the criminal and the state. According to Kynnestar's interior logic, the crime has taken place within his home, and must therefore be of concern to the community. In finding it too dark to invite the community within his home to witness the evidence of his crime, to which the body of his wife has been reduced, he casts the evidence from his home, that his neighbours might view it in the public street. This suggests that the defenestration takes place at dawn, as the first public street-lamps were not installed in England until the 1680s; this timing would also explain the immediate response of the surrounding neighbourhood.<sup>10</sup>

The actions of all the supporting cast of D.S.'s text, as well as those of the narrator himself, reinforce and support the assumptions of Kynnestar. The cry that wakes the narrator is that of a neighbour on viewing the body; the cry is designed to wake him, to alert the whole neighbourhood. The narrator's neighbours together guess at the identity of the murderer, and all support the decision of the narrator to apprehend the murderer and gain his confession himself. Thus, whilst the trial and execution are the ultimate instruments of justice in the text, the discovery of the crime and the judgement of the murderer are represented as the province of his neighbours.

Neighbourhood was defined, as now, as a community living in close physical proximity; yet it could also be used as a mass noun describing neighbours (a sense now obsolete); as an abstract noun with an implied value judgement (as in "neighbourly behaviour"); or to refer to an abstract quality describing behaviour between neighbours, such as 'good' or 'ill' neighbourhood.<sup>11</sup> To live within a neighbourhood thus implied an expectation of a certain standard of behaviour towards that community, and created a particular bond between its members. In *A Briefe Discourse of Two Most Cruell and Bloudie Murthers*, a 1583 pamphlet detailing the murder of one neighbour by another, the anonymous author refers to the crime not as unlawful, but as unnatural, and compares it to the unnatural act of husband murder:

9 D.S., *A True Reporte*, sig. B1<sup>r</sup>.

10 Roy Strong, *London: A Social History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 126.

11 See the *OED*: "neighbourhood," 1a/2a; 4a; 6a; 6b.

Shall I not saye, the husband hath abridged the lyfe of his espoused Wife and mate, and she likewise committed the like unnaturall acte on her Husband? Hath not one brother murdered the other, one neighbour killed the other, one frend been false to the other, yea, & very nature turned agaynst it self?<sup>12</sup>

The legal and ecclesiastical bonds of marriage, the blood ties of fraternity, and the affection and trust implied by friendship, are each likened to the state of neighbourhood. Furthermore, in the same text, the murder of one neighbour by another is described as an “unneighbourlike deede,” suggesting that the inverse of this adjective, “neighbourlike,” is a positive qualifier used to describe support rather than murder, trust rather than betrayal.<sup>13</sup>

The ideal of good neighbourhood could imply imaginative, as well as literal, community. In *A Briefe Sonet Declaring the Lamentation of Beckles*, a ballad by Daniel Sterrie (who may be the “D. S.” who authored *A True Reporte*), the auditors (and readers) are referred to throughout as the personified town’s “neighbours,” and are requested to listen to the lament for this reason. The ballad begins: “My loving good neighbours, that comes to beholde, | Me sillie poore Beckles, in cares manifold.”<sup>14</sup> Here, neighbourhood is a device to involve the audience in another town’s tragedy; as neighbours, auditors are invited to “beholde,” or bear witness to, the town’s troubles. In using the term to evoke solidarity and sympathy in strangers, Sterrie is echoing its use in the narrative of the Good Samaritan in the Geneva Bible: “Which nowe of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the theeves?”<sup>15</sup>

Yet even spiritual neighbourhood is rooted in the concept of shared responsibility implied by physical proximity, as demonstrated by the printed sermon *An Exposition upon the Prophet Jonah*, in which George Abbot frames the ideal of loving one’s neighbour in spatial terms:

Thou oughtest to love thy neighbour, but as thou lovest thy selfe. The example of thy charitie, is drawne from thy selfe at home.<sup>16</sup>

12 Anon., *A Briefe Discourse of Two Most Cruell and Bloudie Murthers* (London: Roger Warde, 1583), sig. A3<sup>r</sup>.

13 Ibid., sig. B1<sup>r</sup>.

14 Daniel Sterrie, *A Briefe Sonet Declaring the Lamentation of Beckles* (London: Robert Robinson, 1586), HEH Britwell 18342.

15 *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition* (Madison, Milwaukee, and London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), Luke 10. 36.

16 George Abbot, *An Exposition upon the Prophet Jonah, Contained in Certaine Sermons Preached in S. Maries Church in Oxford* (London: Richard Field, 1600), p. 126.



The resonance of the spiritual application of this term is drawn from an appreciation of its concrete value; a sense that a neighbour, one who lives in the neighbourhood of one's own home, is as connected morally as spatially with the occurrences within that home. Thus the balladeer of Beckles attempts to draw his listeners into an imaginative community of neighbourhood precisely because physical neighbourhood is imbued with such significance.

Sterrie's ballad is not the only surviving ballad to recount the fire at Beckles. Thomas Deloney's *A Proper New Sonet Declaring the Lamentation of Beckles* appeared the same year, and was printed by the same printer. Yet whilst both ballads speak with the personified voice of the town, Deloney, rather than fashioning the audience into a community of sympathetic neighbours to Beckles, uses Beckles as his mouthpiece to condemn the practice of 'bad' neighbourhood, portraying neighbours who filch and steal "theyr neighbors wealth" in the aftermath of the fire, and describing the man who began the blaze as the "instrument" of God's "ire."<sup>17</sup> Thus the inverse of 'good' neighbourhood, which detects crime through observing nearby households, is 'bad' neighbourhood, which commits crimes against those neighbours.

### *The Horrible Murther of a Young Boy: Tongueless Speech and Sexualized Curiosity*

Whilst the outcomes of neighbourhood surveillance in domestic murder texts are invariably represented as positive, the motivations for this surveillance are not. Consider, for example, the murder pamphlet *The Horrible Murther of a Young Boy of Three Yeres of Age* (1606), in which an old Widow and her son attempt to murder two children – a little boy of less than three years of age, and his sister, of no more than four. The boy is drowned in a ditch, with a piece of wood tied to his back. The girl is forced to watch this, after which her tongue is cut out, and she is left up a tree, to perish. However, she is discovered by a passer-by, and after many weeks of begging on the streets of the town, she is able to alert the neighbourhood to the crimes of the widow, known locally as "Mother Dell," and her son.

The pamphlet opens by recording that the two children, in company with a pedlar and unknown woman, were seen to enter the house of Mother Dell by a tailor and "divers" others, but were not seen to leave it.<sup>18</sup> The first reference to

17 Thomas Deloney, *A Proper New Sonet Declaring the Lamentation of Beckles* (London: Robert Robinson, 1586).

18 Anon., *The Horrible Murther of a Young Boy of Three Yeres of Age* (London: E. Allde, 1606), p. 1.

this sight is not one of concern for the circumstances of children, but one of anxiety about sexual disreputability: the “Children were led into the said house by a wandering Pedler & his wife (or Puncke.)” The narrator would seem to suggest that it is the potential relationship between the pedlar and the unknown woman that causes the observers to pause; they are anxious about the chastity and sexual status of the woman, not about the children accompanying her.

The use of “puncke” is similar to that of Shakespeare in *Measure for Measure*, believed to have been written shortly before the publication of this pamphlet: “she may be a punk, for many of them are neither maid, widow, nor wife.”<sup>19</sup> It suggests a social anxiety, as well as a moral anxiety; a woman who cannot be defined in terms of marital status (due to her presumed unchastity) must be defined as a prostitute, and thus as an outsider. The bystanders here are, as Laura Gowing puts it, “maintaining and surveilling neighbourhood honesty”; Gowing argues that, for women, honesty constituted “sexual honesty.”<sup>20</sup> The tailor is the only one of those watching who takes note of the children, yet he is interested not in their welfare, but in their location, as they are wearing beautiful and fashionable clothes and he wishes to copy the patterns for his trade.

The neighbours, then, are represented as being motivated by both self-interest and a prurient curiosity; they are concerned with gaining knowledge and passing judgement for their own sakes, not for the sake of the community, the justice system, or the individual well-being of those they observe. Yet this does not prevent them from being instruments of good within the text. Indeed, they are portrayed as instruments of a providential God, who stage-manages the discovery of the murderers and miraculously grants speech to the tongueless child, that she might condemn her attackers. However, whilst God needs to intervene in causing the mutilated girl to speak, no such intervention is necessary in order to motivate the neighbours; self-interest is, initially, sufficient to incite their curiosity, although sympathy for the girl soon also plays a part. The motives behind neighbourly curiosity are neither interrogated nor judged; the curiosity itself is represented as a sufficient strategy of legal and moral surveillance.

It is the tailor who first links his observations of the house with wrongdoing. Having seen the children enter, but only the pedlar and his “puncke” exit, he goes to Mother Dell, the owner of the house, and questions her as to the whereabouts of the children. Whilst this does not itself lead to discovery of the

19 William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, v.i.178 in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008).

20 Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Seventeenth Century England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 103, 52.

murderer, it is the first instance within the text of the house itself representing (and therefore revealing) the crimes of the murderers. First the entrances and exits of the pedlar and "puncke" cause the tailor to confront Mother Dell on her own doorstep; next the injured child herself recognizes the house, and cries out, a cry which "drew people about her."<sup>21</sup> Then Mother Dell and her son appear at the door, and the child cries still louder, alerting the neighbours to wrongdoing. "Some of the Neighbours" then enter the house, without permission, leading the child with them.<sup>22</sup>

The local Justice is convinced of the guilt of the murderers. However, they refuse to confess, and as the tongueless girl cannot speak her accusation, the Justice is unable to bring them to trial. He imprisons them until the next assizes, hoping that "God would in time make it yet more plaine then it was."<sup>23</sup> Soon after, God grants miraculous speech to the girl, and she is able to testify at the trial. Before the jury withdraw, they look inside the girl's mouth, but cannot see "so as much as the stumpe of a tongue therein."<sup>24</sup> Having witnessed proof of the God's providential interference, they find the murderers guilty.

This miraculous occurrence might seem out of place in a news pamphlet that purports to present a "true relation" of the crime.<sup>25</sup> Yet such occurrences are in fact characteristic of the genre. The majority of murder pamphlets represent neighbourhood detection and legal judgement as enabled through a Protestant, providential master-narrative in which an omniscient God interferes with the legal and local processes, providing clues, confessions, and the whereabouts of criminals. In *A Horrible Murther*, the providential device of tongueless speech intersects with neighbourhood surveillance and the child's cry on seeing the murderers' house, to bring about their apprehension.

In *Arden of Faversham* (1592), a play based upon the 1551 murder of a Kentish landowner by his wife and various accomplices, the blood of the murdered man "cleaveth" miraculously to the floor; it cannot be removed by scrubbing, and so becomes evidence of his murder.<sup>26</sup> This is a variation on cruentation, "the belief that the corpse of a murdered person would bleed anew in the presence of its murderer."<sup>27</sup> In James VI & I's *Daemonologie* (1597),

21 Anon., *Horrible Murther*, p. 5.

22 Ibid., p. 6.

23 Ibid., p. 7.

24 Ibid., p. 9.

25 Ibid., p. 1.

26 Anon., *Arden of Faversham*, ed. Martin White (London: A & C Black, 1982), xiv.251–256 and 399.

27 Erika T. Lin, *Shakespeare and the Materiality of Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 143.

he claims that a corpse touched by the perpetrator “wil gush out of bloud, as if the blud wer crying to the heaven for revenge of the murtherer,” a “secret super-naturall signe” appointed by God.<sup>28</sup> This miraculous occurrence frequently occurs in news pamphlets, as in early modern judicial processes; as Malcolm Gaskill notes, cruentation not only “added dramatic tension to popular pamphlets,” but also “actually featured in trials.”<sup>29</sup>

In *Arden*, the idea of cruentation is transfigured, as the house itself becomes allied with both murderer and victim, bearing witness to the guilt of the latter and the wounds of the former. Yet it is not necessary to the process of detection; the fatal entrance of the murdered man has already been witnessed by Arden’s neighbours.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, in *The Horrible Murther*, the mutilated child’s identification of the home with the criminal becomes an incident of miraculous speech, as the child’s wounded mouth that noisily but wordlessly implored the neighbourhood to grant her justice, is granted the ability to speak in order to bring about that justice. Yet the child’s presence in the courtroom, that she might miraculously testify, is dependent on neighbourhood surveillance.

It is significant that it is the sight of the house, not the criminals, that first causes the child to cry out in accusation; she identifies her attackers (and the murderers of her brother) with the house that contains them. This identification is reinforced by the logic of the narrative; the child’s wordless accusations are confirmed by the objects within the house as the home gives up its secrets. The God-given miracle of speech, which allows the child to testify against the murderers, is rendered practically unnecessary by the power of the home as both representation of the criminals, and revelatory scene of the crime. What makes this still more significant is that the crime in its entirety does not occur in the house; much of it takes place in the surrounding woods and fields. Yet the home is so much identified with its (criminal) owners that it becomes the revelatory site of their secrets, whether or not it has witnessed them.

Neighbourhood surveillance, then, is represented as legitimated by suspicion of misconduct, sexual or otherwise. However, neighbourhood interference requires not only suspicion, but also evidence. When the tailor and “divers” others suspect a link between the house and sexual immorality, it licenses them to knock upon the door and question the owners, but not to

28 James VI and I, *Daemonologie* (Edinburgh: Robert Waldegrave, 1597), p. 80.

29 Malcolm Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 227.

30 For further discussion, see my article “Marrow-prying neighbours’: Staging Domestic Space and Neighbourhood Surveillance in *Arden of Faversham*”, *Cahiers Élisabéthains* (forthcoming: June/July 2015).

enter. When the child suggests a link between her wound and the house, it licenses the neighbours to approach the house; and when the child suggests a yet stronger link between her wounds and the owners of the house, it licenses them to enter. Transgression dissolves both the boundaries to private property, and the occupier's rights to protect those boundaries. The household only retains its private authority as long as it remains subject to public laws. Once these laws are suspected of having been broken, the house becomes open to the community; furthermore, the house is portrayed as legitimately betraying its inhabitants by giving up its secrets to those outside its walls.

### "The Lorde will bring it out": Providential Detection

The reactions of the neighbourhood to crimes within that neighbourhood in *A Horrible Murther* are represented as legitimate, lawful, and sanctioned by God. The same is true of *The Truth of the Most Wicked and Secret Murthering of John Brewen* (1592), in which Anne Brewen murders her husband, John Brewen, at the behest of her lover, John Parker. She pledges herself initially to both men, and only marries Brewen after he has her arrested for refusing to return the jewels he gifted her on the understanding that they would marry. When she agrees to marry him, he drops all charges. However, Parker persuades her to refuse to share her husband's bed until he buys her a better house, and Anne moves to lodgings some distance away in order to be close to Parker. She then murders her husband.

The crime is discovered two years later, when Anne is overheard arguing about the crime with her lover: "These speeches thus spoken betweene them in vehemencie of spirite, was over heard of some that revealed it to the majestates."<sup>31</sup> Anne is at this point pregnant with Parker's child, and attempts to persuade him to marry her. She strives to hide the pregnancy from her neighbours until the marriage takes place; indeed, she is so anxious to save her credit that she will not "goe forth of her doores for feare her neighbours should perceave her great bellie."<sup>32</sup> Thus her neighbours overhear the above speeches when she is within her home; the early modern home again becomes an "arena

31 Anon, *The Trueth of the Most Wicked and Secret Murthering of John Brewen* (London: Edward White, 1592), p. 6. This pamphlet was attributed to Thomas Kyd by J.P. Collier, but that attribution is debated; see Arthur Freeman and Janet Ing Freeman, *John Payne Collier: Scholarship and Forgery in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 857–860.

32 Anon., *Murthering of John Brewen*, p. 5.

of surveillance," where private speech may be overheard by those outside its walls.

The eavesdropping is here justified by what is overheard; the criminality of the speech allows the neighbours to report it rightfully to the magistrates. It is further justified by the moral the author draws from it: that "the Lorde will bring it out, for bloud is an unceassant crier in the eares of the Lord and he will not leave so vilde a thing unpunished."<sup>33</sup> The act of eavesdropping is rendered providential, enabled by God and carried out through the curiosity of his instruments, and thus the motives of the neighbours become unimportant.

Providential interference is not confined to the processes of detection. *Sundrye Strange and Inhumaine Murthers, Lately Committed* (1591) recounts the murder of Master Page of Plymouth by his wife. The pamphleteer chronicles that on the night the murder takes place, and for three nights after, "an ugly thing formed like a Beare" is seen, carrying a linen cloth "representing the instruement wherewith the saide M. Page was murdered."<sup>34</sup> A raven and a mysterious ship are also spotted. Each of these is characterized as a mysterious portent, which, whilst proven unnecessary in the discovery of the murder, manifests a divine concern that the crime be detected. The providential framework, then, can encompass miraculous events necessary to the detection of a crime, such as the speech of the tongueless child; miraculous portents which are not necessary, such as a bear-like creature carrying a murder weapon; and even crimes themselves, whether accidental or not, as in the case of the fire at Beckles. God's instruments may be miraculous, human, or quasi-demonic, and his role may be detection, decoration, or even earthly punishment for earthly wrongs: the authors of news texts can use any or all of these models of providential interference to suit the purposes of their narratives.

Furthermore, the authors of domestic murder texts frequently emphasize the fact that human motives may be marshalled for divine purposes. In *The Most Wicked and Secret Murthering*, the curiosity of the neighbours, as Alice's anxieties about the possible detection of her pregnancy make clear, is directed towards the sexual status of the woman in question, not towards the possibility of detecting a crime. It is her chastity with which they are concerned, and thus her sexual and social position, not her potential for criminality. It is only when directed by God that this prurient eavesdropping becomes an act of detection.

A similar act of overhearing takes place in *The Arraignment of Margaret Fern-seede* (1608), in which Margaret Fernseede, a former prostitute who runs

33 Ibid., p. 6.

34 Anon., *Sundrye Strange and Inhumaine Murthers, Lately Committed* (London: Thomas Scarlet, 1591), sig. B4<sup>v</sup>.

a secret brothel within her marital home, stabs her husband to death. Her motive for the crime is her husband's discovery of her illicit activities: he overhears strange men speaking and coughing in the next room, and confronts his wife. Here, the act of eavesdropping precipitates one crime in revealing another; once Margaret Fernseede's role as a bawd has been discovered by her husband, she decides to murder him. Overhearing secrets that have penetrated walls proves for him to be fatal. Both accounts testify to the permeability of the early modern home; walls were thin, and whilst private spaces may have existed within the home, private conversations could not be guaranteed. Yet they also suggest the limits of neighbourly curiosity.

In both texts, as in *A Horrible Murther*, sexualized neighbourly curiosity is able to discover the crime, but it is entirely unable to prevent it. Anne Brewen is able to poison her husband gradually, over several days and nights, without the suspicion of her neighbours, despite the fact that she has not lodged with him since their wedding night, and is regularly visited by the man who was formerly her suitor. The existence of separate homes might be partially to blame for this; as she lives apart from her husband, the neighbours of her husband are not also her neighbours, and therefore cannot observe her behaviour outside his home. Yet there is also an essential misreading of the situation on the part of the neighbours:

No person as then suspecting any manner of evil done to him by his wife, but esteemed her a very honest woman, although through her youth, she knew not as then how to behave herself to her husband so kindly as she ought, which they imputed to her ignorance, rather then to any mallice conceived against her husband[.]<sup>35</sup>

Likewise, two neighbours speak to Margaret Fernseede after the discovery of her husband's body, and infer from her callous reaction that she may have been responsible for his murder. However, despite the fact that Anthony Fernseede is "amongst his neighbours, reputed to be both sober and of verie good conversation," whilst Margaret commits acts of "publique and inrespective unchastitie," no neighbour informs Anthony of the fact prior to his demise. It is his own discovery of it that occasions his murder.<sup>36</sup> In the case of husband murder described in *A Briefe Discourse*, the neighbours do not suspect the planned crime, but they perceive "the common and dishonest behaviour of this wicked

35 Anon., *Murthering of John Brewen*, p. 5.

36 Anon., *The Araigement & Burning of Margaret Ferne-seede* (London: E. Allde, 1608), sig. A3<sup>v</sup>.

women,” and talk of it so much that word comes “at last to her husbands eares,” and so helps bring about his death.<sup>37</sup> Thus there are limits to the potency of neighbourhood surveillance; it is a force for detection, not for prevention, and is motivated by prurient curiosity, not by concern. It is only wholly a force for good when rendered providential by God.

### The Murder of William Storre: Neighbours, Writers, Readers

In *The Manner of the Cruell Outragious Murther of William Storre* (1603) a parish priest, William Storre, is stabbed in the street by Francis Cartwright, the son of a local lord. He later dies of his injuries. A passing maidservant witnesses the attack, and cries out, which causes Cartwright to flee. This brings “many of the neighbors” to the scene of the crime.<sup>38</sup> But they are so disturbed to see their near-dead minister bleeding heavily, that they run into the town, all variously yelling and crying “murder,” so that those who hear them do not understand what has occurred and toll the town bells, thinking there may have been a fire. It takes some time to alert the proper authorities, by which time the murderer has fled and is hiding in his father’s house. The concerned neighbours are here represented as obstructing the course of justice, rather than assisting it; furthermore, their actions reinforce the authority of the private householder, who is able to protect his murderous son within his home, rather than challenging this private authority as having been undone by the nature of the crime.

As in *A Proper New Sonnet*, the neighbours here do not demonstrate “good neighbourhood.” Rather, they are symptomatic of the dangers of living in close proximity with those who, unlike members of the household, have no vested interest in the success of the larger unit. Furthermore, just as the plundering of neighbourhood property only becomes possible in *A Proper New Sonnet* when the integrity of individual households, and thus the demarcation of property, is destroyed, so the obstruction of justice by bystanders in *The Manner of the Cruell Outragious Murder* is only possible because the crime scene is spatially unbounded.

The attack upon William Storre does not take place in a private residence, and it is the public nature of the crime, which cannot be contained within a single building or identified as the responsibility of a single householder, that produces the confused and potentially dangerous response amongst those

37 Anon., *A Briefe Discourse*, sig. B2<sup>v</sup>.

38 Anon., *The Manner of the Cruell Outrageous Murder of William Storre* (Oxford: Joseph Barnes, 1603), sig. A3<sup>r</sup>.



who discover it. A similar reaction is evident in *A True Reporte*, prior to the moment when the home of the murdered woman – and thus the location of the murder and the identity of the murderer – is identified. By occurring in a public space that is ruled by no single, local authority, but only by the wider state, the stabbing of William Storre lessens the power of the neighbours to intervene.

Yet *The Manner of the Cruell Outragious Murther* is unusual, in that it not only portrays the reaction of a community to murder; it is itself a communal response to the murder, and a neighbourhood attempt to bring the murderer to justice. Rather than encasing the narrative of the murder within a textual framework of discovery, trial, and retribution, the text enacts the condemnation of the murderer by the community, and aims to influence public justice and thus bring about execution. It is at once 'news' and petition. The necessity for this stems from the position and power of the murderer; due to his father's wealth and influence, and a perceived lack of evidence (which the pamphlet argues can be contradicted by the testimony of witnesses), the justice system refused the case. Thus the four signed testimonies affixed to the pamphlet attest to the truth of the account and the character of the murdered man, and each is accompanied by names of those of similar position and walks of life: one signed by parishioners, one by preachers, one by knights and esquires, and one by bachelors and doctors of divinity from Oxford. The various neighbourhoods of which the murdered priest was part – physical, educational, and spiritual communities – attempt to enact the process of justice on his behalf. As in so many murder pamphlets, the testimonies are not signed by eyewitnesses to the murder or by auditors of the murderer's confession; they have heard the accounts of others and drawn their own conclusions.

*The Manner of the Cruell Outragious Murther*, therefore, is able to represent potentially dangerous and foolish mass responses to crime, precisely because it fashions itself as the opposite to the communal behaviour it narrates. William Storre's murder does not occur within a private residence, but it does occur within an identifiable neighbourhood. The murder of the priest is geographically situated within his own parish, and thus becomes the responsibility of his parishioners, who set themselves up as judges, independent of legal responsibility or authority bestowed by the state. In signing these testimonies, the representatives of William Storre's communities do not themselves attest that they have seen the crime, or the evidence of it; not even the narrator can claim this, and the discovery of the body in this case belongs to the nameless maid who neither adds her testimony nor her signature.

The pamphlet is keen to emphasize that whilst the murder took place outside, the actual death of the priest occurred a couple of days later, in the

private, enclosed space of his bedchamber. His injuries, received on the street, took many days to kill him, and thus his dying words were spoken from his bed. The narrator, invited into the bedchamber of the dying man, imaginatively extends this invitation to the geographical and spiritual communities of the victim, through representing both space and words in his account. The reader of the pamphlet, given access to the same narrative, to the same hearsay, and to the names and testimonies of the men who support its (reported) truth, is invited to do the same, and thus to participate, like the “neighbours” in Sterrie’s ballad, in a fictional community of readers and auditors, who may themselves discover, judge, and distribute the “truth” the text conveys.

Thus the representation of neighbourhood in news pamphlets relating domestic murders is at once a shared fantasy of a world in which crimes, through providence, law, and neighbourhood, are made manifest and known, and a pragmatic acceptance of the limits of neighbourly suspicion and interference. In a world in which conduct books, law treatises, and state-sanctioned homilies propagate the ideal of the home as both an Englishman’s castle and a self-contained system of government, neighbours can witness and judge, but cannot always intervene.<sup>39</sup> News pamphlets and ballads can emphasize their proximity to the workings of the legal system, to the witnesses who give their names and testimonies, and to the crime itself, but they cannot fully contain the disruptive potential of domestic murder. Yet in fashioning an imaginative community of omniscient readers and auditors, able to access clues, confessions, and the crime itself independently of the apparatus of law, these news texts allow their audiences to participate in the illusion of security created by a God-driven, legally sanctioned narrative of detection, punishment, and neighbourhood judgement.

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39 William Lambard, *Eirenarcha: Or of the Office of the Justices of Peace in Two Bookes*, 2 vols (London: Newbery and Bynneman, 1581), vol. 1, p. 158.

## Life After Death

### *Gender, Idealized Virtues, and the Obituary in Eighteenth-Century Newspapers*

Catherine Tremain

This chapter quarries the content of the obituary notices contained within the pages of the eighteenth-century provincial presses of Exeter and Norwich. For an obituary, a term not commonly used in the eighteenth century, I have taken notices of a death that included some description of the personal attributes of the deceased. The aim of the chapter is fourfold: to understand the nature and purpose of obituaries; to identify universal cardinal virtues and measure any gendered relational nature in those virtues; to chart any changes in emphasis in the types of values lauded over the period; and, finally, to assess the significance obituaries themselves may have had in shaping both male and female identities. For reasons that will become clear, the focus of this study is the obituary notices of the ‘middling sort’, whose voice in the provincial presses was not only distinctive, but was also markedly different from that of its contemporary metropolitan competitors.<sup>1</sup>

The qualities contained in obituaries offer us a time capsule that enshrines the ideology and aspirations of character traits prized by that culture, at that time. In sum, attitudes to the dead reflect contemporary attitudes to life. As such, they provide an invaluable, if neglected, documentary source for the social historian, especially the historian of gender. Here, in the published short accounts of recently extinguished lives, we witness a fleeting but significant public opportunity, not only to commemorate but to privilege the ‘private’. Yet of course these notices did not dress the departed in the garments that they wore in life, gravy stains and all, but in their Sunday best. Thus, they encapsulate an *idealized representation* of the deceased’s societal worth, demonstrated in their reported virtues, roles, and achievements. For the middling sort these printed tributes targeted a range of qualities that were ‘normatively exemplary’: ones to be striven for, yet attainable.

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1 For a detailed analysis of where provincial newspapers sit in contrast to metropolitan and elite death notices, see Catherine Tremain, “Masculinity and Gendered Relationships and Reputation in the Eighteenth Century Provincial Press” (PhD thesis, University of Exeter, 2010), esp. chapter 7 and conclusion.

### The Metamorphosis of the 'Obituary'

In order to understand the distinctiveness of provincial middling obituaries and the ways in which they differed from their elite brothers and sisters, we need to look at a typical 'obituary' of an aristocrat (see Fig. 9.1).

Lord Feversham's death notice is shorn of personal qualities; it speaks only of blood status, honours awarded, family seats, marriage alliances, and progeny. These were Anthony Duncobe's life achievements, but the reader is left with no idea of his private virtues. In contrast, this is an obituary of an 'ordinary' woman:

Saturday last died, aged 25 years, Mrs. Raven, wife of Henry Raven, of this city, saddler. She [...] died with a resignation that bespoke the true Christian; she was an affectionate wife and sincere friend, and her death is greatly lamented, not only by her inconsolable friends, but even those of her slightest acquaintance.<sup>2</sup>

Laft Saturday died, after a few hours illness, at his feat at Barford, in the county of Wilts, the right hon. Anthony Duncombe, Lord Feversham, Baron of Downton; created a peer in 1747. His Lordship married Margaret, daughter to the late, and sister to the present Lord Willoughby de Broke, who died in October 1755, by whom his lordship had two sons and one daughter, since dead. His second lady was Frances, daughter of Peter Bathurst, Esq; of Clarendon Park, in Wiltshire, who died in child-bed in 1757. His third Lady was Anne, daughter of Sir Thomas Hales, Bart. of Howlet in Kent. Each of these two ladies had a daughter.

FIGURE 9.1 *The death notice of Lord Feversham. Norwich Gazette & Norfolk & Suffolk Advertiser, 25 June 1763. Image courtesy of Norfolk County Council Library*

2 *Norfolk Chronicle*, 29 July 1780.

Men's obituaries were laid out in a similar vein, for example the local sadler, Mr Philip Tricks: "[W]as remarkable for [his] integrity and honesty in both his public and private connections through life."<sup>3</sup>

Elite death notices, such as Lord Feversham's, did of course appear in the provincial papers, no doubt because their celebrity and influential status gave their deaths a topical interest. Yet, their personal qualities – when mentioned at all – were reserved for their own journals such as *The Gentleman's Magazine*.<sup>4</sup> Employees and journeymen in trade – albeit infrequently, and often with paternalistic overtones – were listed in the provincial papers, for example, the obituary to Samuel Triggs, an Exeter tailor: "[I]n which business he carried on a number of years, with a satisfaction to his employers and reputation to himself."<sup>5</sup> However, no named obituaries for servants are found. This was a submerged class that was excluded from personal attribution and, unless their criminal history made them infamous, they were posthumously cheated out of any personal identity. Of course their deaths were mentioned in the newspapers, especially if occurring in unhappy or unusual circumstances but, save in the dock or on the scaffold, they were not mentioned by name but only by their relationship to their employer, whose name was included.

What defines the middling sort at this time is contentious amongst historians. Here I have taken it in its broadest sense to include those above servant class who had to work for their living, had a measure of standing in their community, yet were not of high birth.<sup>6</sup> As the century progressed, the occurrence of obituaries for people in these middling occupations – be they professionals, merchants, farmers, artisans, or tradespeople – did become far more common. That said, it is important to note that the obituary never came near to replacing

3 *Exeter Flying Post*, 6 September 1787.

4 Founded in London by Edward Cave in 1731, *The Gentleman's Magazine* remained in print until the early twentieth century. As editor, Cave adopted the *nom de plume* of "Silvanus Urban, *gent*"; this mixed metaphor encapsulated the 'brand': one that hoped to appeal to 'Town' and 'Country' alike – so long as they were gentlemen. Later eighteenth-century editors, such as John Nichols and his son, also adopted the name. The monthly journal was the first to use the term *magazine* (meaning "storehouse" in French). Aimed at the educated 'gentleman', the magazine contained a mixture of news and political commentary, arts reviews, articles of historical interest, maps, plates, and letter contributions, along with birth, marriage, and death announcements of notable personages.

5 *Exeter Flying Post*, 22 November 1782.

6 This concurs with Sweet's definition: Rosemary Sweet, *The English Town 1680–1840: Government, Society and Culture* (London: Longman, 1999), pp. 179–180; see also Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London 1660–1730* (Berkley: Methuen and University of California Press, 1989).

simple death notices announcing so and so had passed away with perhaps the date, place, and manner of his or her passing. Proportionately, 'middling' obituaries seem to turn up with greater frequency after 1760, but even then, out of roughly eight to ten notices of a death, only one might fall under my criteria for an obituary, that is, including personal attributes of the deceased. Fig. 9.2 illustrates a typical weekly miscellany that included the normal mix of death notices and obituaries.

Appraising the metamorphosis of obituary notices – which accorded worth to the lives of 'ordinary' mortals and fêted their probity – is tricky because its adoption as a popular structure appears to have been a glacially

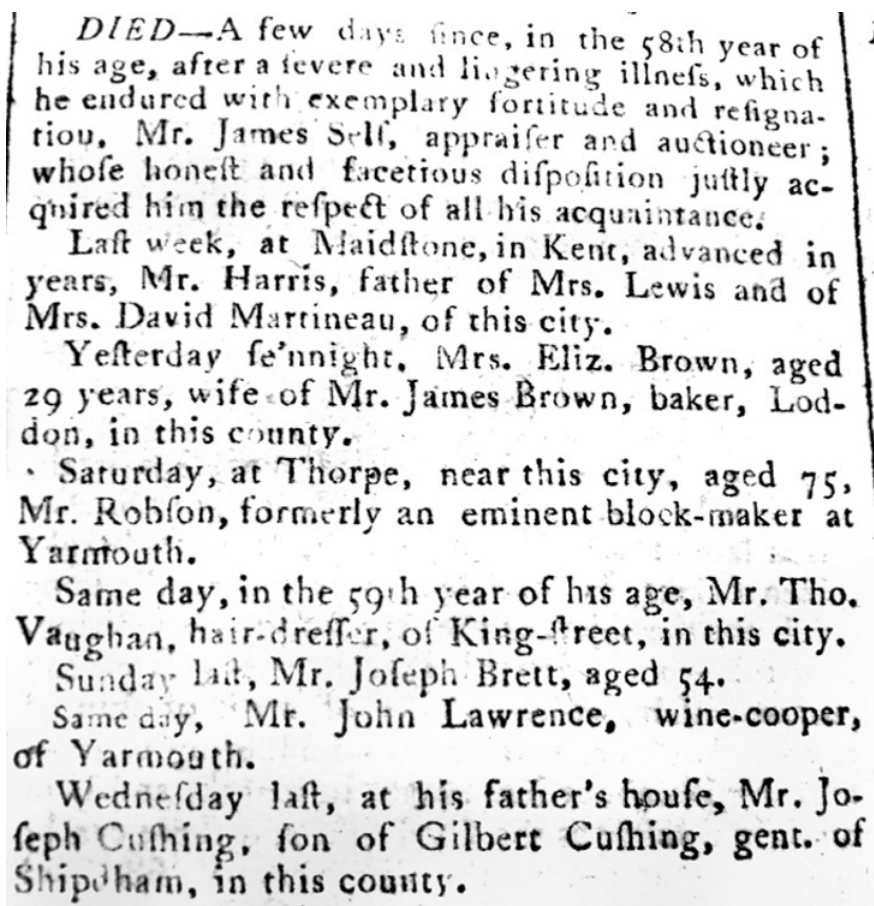


FIGURE 9.2 A typical provincial mix of obituary and death notices. *Norwich Mercury*, 18 February 1797. Image courtesy of Norfolk County Council Library

slow process.<sup>7</sup> The form that it eventually took was a distinctly hybrid one: part informative death notice, part personal elegy. Indeed, measurable data collected from provincial obituaries only becomes viable for the period from the 1760s.<sup>8</sup>

### Who 'Controlled' the Text?

The next question that needs to be asked is from where did these notices originate? How were they garnered, and who was their author? The patronizing tone of the following notice upsets any assumptions that these announcements were, as they are today, personal notices paid for by relatives.

On Saturday last, Mr James Seagon, butcher, dropped down dead in the market with a cleaver in his hand, as he was chopping a piece of beef. He was a friendly well behaved man, and much respected.<sup>9</sup>

This was news; death was news, and a local death, important news that added to the flavour that gave the journal its local identity. Understanding in what measure death announcements were purchased by relatives, or information about a death gratefully received (and paid for) by an intelligence hungry editor, has important implications since the nature of the transaction distorts

7 David Jenkins (1582–1663) was a prominent Royalist judge during the Civil War. His obituary was apparently the first of its kind in the English-speaking world, published by Roger L'Estrange in *The Newes* on 17 December 1663: "He dyed, as he lived, preaching [...] Loyalty to his Majesty, and Obedience to the Lawes of the Land." In terms of the 'popular' press, John Dunton's 'innovative' *Post-Angel*, included a section of biography and obituary as early as 1701, as did *The Gentleman's Magazine* from 1731, including, after 1738, some penned by Samuel Johnson. Howard, whose study largely focuses on representations of the elite, argues that in the London press of the eighteenth century, the obituary "rapidly secured a significant and consistent presence." See Steven Howard, "A bright pattern to all her sex': representations of women in periodical and newspaper biography" in Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (eds.), *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities* (London: Longman, 1997), p. 231.

8 This date coincides with the findings of Looney who looked at the newspapers of York and Leeds, and discerned an "appreciable increase" in the local content of the newspapers from 1760–1784, and a "substantial increase" in the period 1784–1807. J.J. Looney, "Advertising and Society in England, 1720–1820, A Statistical Analysis of Yorkshire Newspaper Advertisements" (PhD thesis, Princeton University, 1983), pp. 37–39; see also Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), p. 282.

9 *Norfolk Chronicle*, 18 November 1780.

or at least colours the transmission of the information. In this case it conflates and confuses the areas of what was public and what was private; what was 'promotion' and what was 'fact'; what was subjective and what was objective – and whose 'objectivity' or 'subjectivity' was being offered to the consumer. All of which, of course, has implications for the manner in which these notices were read, understood, and digested.

It is important to note that these death notices and obituaries (at least at a provincial level), were not individually boxed-in as other 'advertisements' were (see Fig. 9.3). Instead, they were presented and offered as *news* within the designated area put aside for domestic intelligence. This raises the question of whether death notices and obituaries, offered to the readers as news, were actually read by the public as news? Two points flow from this. First, as these announcements appeared to have no overt commercial motive, objectivity might be assumed. Second, notices that did contain personal qualities or enlarged upon biographical information followed a pattern, a formula, from which they rarely deviated throughout the period. Only a few individualistic obituaries conspicuously reveal stylistic non-conformity in their (sometimes attributed) authorship, occasionally in hyperbolic verse. (These hyperbolic creations are not counted in the survey that follows.) These very personal

A youth of reputable parents is wanted for an Appren-  
tice, with whom a premium will be expected.

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**W.** RYE, LINEN-DRAPER, wants an AP-  
PRENTICE. A premium will be expected.

---

**WANTED,**  
**A** YOUNG ABLE MAN, as LIVERY SER-  
VANT, about 17 or 18 years of age, of unexcep-  
tionable character.—No one need apply who cannot be well  
recommended for honesty and sobriety.  
Enquire of the printers of this paper.

---

**To be SOLD,**  
**A** Handsome town-built POST CHAISE, with or  
without Harnes for a Pair of Horses.—Enquire of  
Messrs. Adams and Bacon, Norwich.

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LOWESTOFT M.

FIGURE 9.3 Typical layout of boxed-in and paid-for advertisements. Norwich Gazette, 10 March 1792. Image courtesy of Norfolk County Council Library



eulogies are clearly signposted as such and were thus separate from the mainstay 'objective' obituary as news content, the latter's formulaic pattern disguising authorship and giving them the authority of apparent detachment. Thus (although impossible to speak with unqualified conviction at this distance), there is a strong argument to support the idea that these provincial obituaries were both presented and read as (objective) news.

Having established they were presented to the reader as a package of *information*, what also needs to be confirmed is whether the content of these obituary 'news' items appear to be prescriptive, delineated 'from above', or whether they articulated a vision held by the subject's peers. This might be answered by the interactive nature of the discourse and the fact that obituary content was harvested from a wide variety of sources: the newspaper's street hawkers, 'herb women' paid by the editor to bring back local information, relatives of the deceased, and members of the public.<sup>10</sup> Their content was, in significant measure, guided and controlled by the consumer. The competitive and capricious nature of the provincial news business meant that although a few successful journals passed on down through family members – notably the Chase family in Norfolk and the Trewmans of Devon – the arrival of substantial eighteenth-century newspaper barons eluded the provinces.<sup>11</sup> In short, the provincial newspaper proprietors/editors were of the middling sort themselves, and the authorial voice was not external and imposed, but involved a negotiated *collaboration*. Thus, whether written by a hack, guided by the hand of the editor, appropriated from what had gone before, or created individually, in the provincial press, obituaries were written by the middling sort and for the middling sort. As James Raven states: "texts cannot control response; response derives from social circumstances which imbue every text with a certain instability rather than a predictable fixity."<sup>12</sup>

Here then is an example of texts whose instability and social circumstance were controlled by the consumer. This gives them a degree of authenticity, and

10 For the most comprehensive explanation of the roles of newspaper distributors – carriers, hawkers, and criers etc., see: Christine Y. Ferdinand, *Benjamin Collins and the Provincial Newspaper Trade in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), esp. chapters 2 and 3.

11 For the 'middling' credential of the editors and a fuller discussion on their role, status, and editorial 'voice' see: Catherine Tremain, "Masculinity and Gendered Relationships," esp. chapter 1; Catherine Tremain "Stationers and the Inception of the Enlightenment in Norwich 1660–1720" (MA Dissertation, University of East Anglia, 2007), published online by the Heritage Economic and Regeneration Trust (HEART): [http://www.heritagecity.org/user\\_files/downloads/stationers-and-the-inception-of-the-enlightenment.pdf](http://www.heritagecity.org/user_files/downloads/stationers-and-the-inception-of-the-enlightenment.pdf).

12 James Raven, "New Reading Histories, Print Culture and the Identification of Change: The Case of Eighteenth Century England," *Social History*, 23 (1998), p. 268.

also provides us with a direct insight into how they were intended to be read. Unlike 'external' dictatorial conduct literature 'from outside', there is an immediacy, an intimate and self-policing peer-on-peer prescription, inherent in these provincial obituaries. Moreover, this 'self-policing' prescription was self-fulfilling, not only standardizing middling virtues but disseminating them to an audience outside its own remit. Not only did these obituaries consolidate middling virtues, but they transmitted their worth to other consumers of the newspapers – the elite and the literate lower orders, even percolating into oral culture – thus making these virtues normative, not to say mandatory, to aspire to.

The formulaic, prescriptive nature of these obituaries affirms the middling urge for conformity. Accordingly, what was omitted in these notices is as telling as what was included. There was, for instance, very rarely any reference to personal appearance. In this period of extreme party factionalism between Tories and Whigs, a much more significant exclusion was the paucity of any direct reference to the departed's political affiliation.<sup>13</sup> A very few deceased were noted for their loyalty to King and/or "our happy constitution," these, however, were usually in the militia. Likewise, apart from the occasional noted Quaker's death, other religious dissenters and their sectarian membership were rarely singled out for mention at death. In late eighteenth-century death then, we witness a religiously non-sectarian and politically neutral territory, which possessed, textually, an overarching diplomatic blandness to avoid any danger of offence. It was a liminal space which intended to expunge 'enthusiasms' that might cause affront to the living, that is, any offence that might negate or undermine, in the prejudiced reader's mind, a cherished virtue.<sup>14</sup> These virtues had to be universal, had to speak to a humanity free from bigotry or partisanship: they had to *unite*. What is more, their didactic message had to speak to the widest possible audience.

### Virtues and Their Gendered Implications

Amongst the obituaries listed in both cities, there is a narrow range of vaunted qualities mentioned for both sexes. The *types* of virtues touched on varied not

13 For a summation of the historiographical interpretations surrounding the "age of party" see: Clyve Jones (ed.), *Britain in the First Age of Party 1680–1750: Essays Presented to Geoffrey Holmes* (London: Hambledon Press, 1987).

14 For a discussion on the importance of 'identity' in historical debate and the confusion between 'self-identity' and 'identification with others', see Henry French and Jonathan Barry (eds.), *Identity and Agency in England, 1500–1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004), esp. introduction, pp. 1–37.

at all. Having first isolated the most common virtues cited, the graphs and table which follow (see Fig. 9.4–6; Table 9.1) measure the frequency of their occurrence in individual obituaries of Norwich and Exeter from the 1760s through to the close of the 1790s. In other words, the data reflects the qualities that appear most often as a kind of ‘tick box’ of posthumously celebrated virtues. These virtues are:

1. Sincerity/honesty/integrity
2. Piety/Christianity
3. Having moral virtues
4. Being respected/esteemed
5. Warmth/affableness/amiableness
6. Being a tender partner/affectionate parent/dutiful child
7. Charitableness/being a friend to the poor

These were the most frequently cited core values found in the obituary notices for either sex. Essentially they were gender-neutral virtues, but in practice they usually turned up in greater or lesser frequency in association with the gender of the subject. Two virtues (not in the seven most frequent listed above) were gender exclusive:

- Industry (exclusively male)
- Having common/good sense (exclusively female)

The survey that follows catalogues and scrutinizes the qualities listed in 200 obituaries: 25 obituaries for each sex in each decade over a forty-year period beginning in 1760. Where obituaries included more than one of the above qualities, each occurrence is counted separately. Figs 9.4 and 9.5 show, for men and women respectively, the proportions between the frequencies of occurrence for each quality as percentages of the total number of mentions of qualities for the whole period.

Sincerity/honesty/integrity had a 30% share of mentions in obituaries for men, compared with only 2% for women. This was, by far, the most frequently observed virtue to be listed in male obituaries; but was the least frequently awarded virtue in the women’s obituaries. As such, it shows the widest divide in attributed gendered qualities. Christian virtue and piety, at a 22% share, was the most frequently mentioned virtue in women’s posthumous notices. If sincerity defined the universal worthy man, piety perhaps defined the righteous woman. The having of ‘moral virtues’ as a category encompasses non-specific expressions that were not explicitly linked to religious devotion, such as living a virtuous life, or, as in the case of Mr Raven of Harpley, being

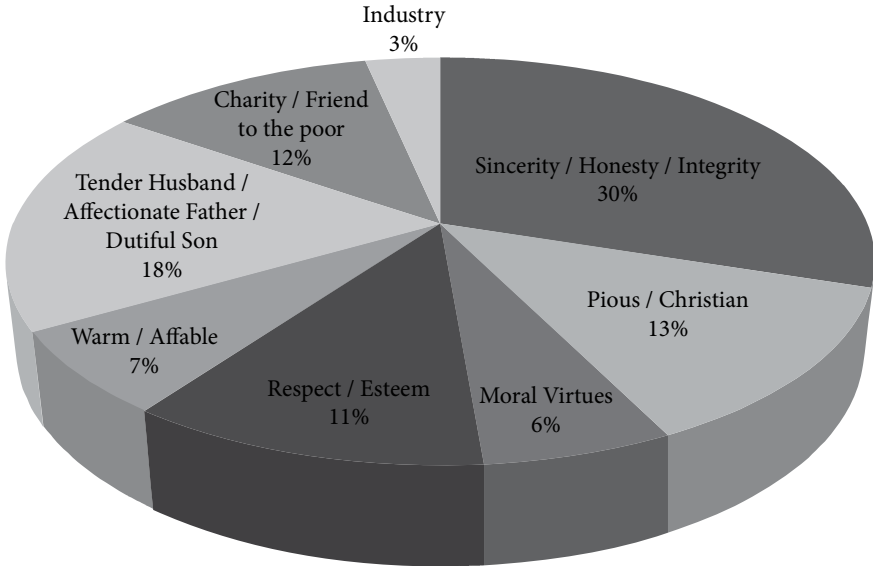


FIGURE 9.4 *Men's obituary qualities: 1760–1800*

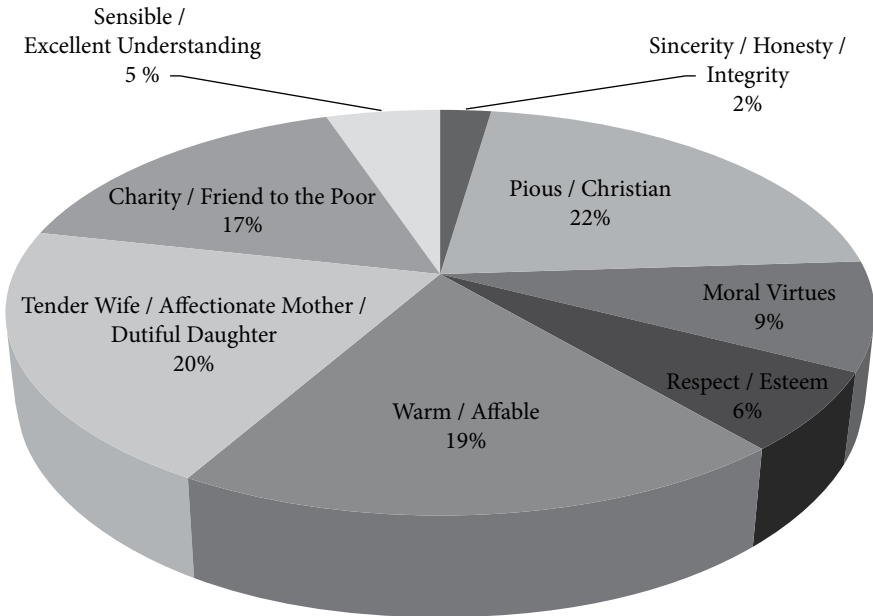


FIGURE 9.5 *Women's obituary qualities: 1760–1800*

praised as a man “addicted to no vice.”<sup>15</sup> These were catch all phrases that indicated the deceased had led an exemplary life and were used, where specifics were omitted, to fortify their decency. Mentions of ‘moral virtues’ make up 6% in the male survey, and 9% in the female.

Greater importance in the men’s chart was conferred to the idea of respect or being held in esteem (11%), compared to a 6% share of the virtues for women. This no doubt reflected men’s easier access to the economic, civic, and magisterial sphere. Although, it should be added, that in the decade-by-decade breakdown (see Table 9.1), its relevance for men had depreciated by the century’s close.

Attributes that reflect warmth, amiability, and affability, made up only a 7% share of the total virtues listed for men (12 mentions out of 176), whereas 19% of the woman’s total (34 out of 175) is given over to these qualities. This was the third most prevalent characteristic for women, and the third least frequent

TABLE 9.1 *Frequency of gendered necrological merits*

	1760s		1770s		1780s		1790s		Total mentions		Change	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
Sincerity/honesty/integrity	10	2	13	1	13	1	16	0	52	4	+6	-2
Pious/christian	8	9	7	10	6	8	2	11	23	38	-6	+2
Moral virtues	3	6	6	4	2	3	0	2	11	15	-3	-4
Respect/esteem	10	2	5	4	4	3	0	2	19	11	-10	0
Warm/affable/amiable	7	10	2	7	3	11	0	6	12	34	-7	-4
Tender partner/ affectionate parent/ dutiful child	4	8	3	8	10	10	14	9	31	35	+10	+1
Charitable/friend to the poor	7	9	8	9	6	3	1	8	22	29	-6	-1
Industry	0		1		2		3		6	-	+3	-
Common sense/good sense		4		2		3		0	-	9	—	
Total	50	49	48	42	48	40	45	29	176	175		

Key: M, Men; W, Women

15 Mr Raven was “an opulent farmer”; *Norwich Mercury*, 15 April 1780.

characteristic attributed to a man. Again this was an area where virtues seem to have been gendered. However, in the forty years under examination, mentions of tender spouses, affectionate parents, or dutiful children etc. made up 18% (31 out of 176) of the enumerated male qualities, and 20% (35 out of 175) of the female. This domestic area was, apparently, crucial to male identity across the board, whether high profile public figures or local carpenters. The frequent occurrence of the adjective 'tender' – which was analogous to ideas of empathy, sensitivity, and of being in touch with one's emotions, and thus distinct from warmth and affability – affirms Bailey's finding that tenderness was an idealized aspirational quality for late Georgian fatherhood.<sup>16</sup> Although it was interchangeable with 'affectionate' as a term to denote familial love and emotional susceptibility, in the provincial obituaries 'tender' was most commonly associated with the role of a parent – occasionally men were tender husbands, less frequently men were deemed tender sons. After 'sincerity', this demonstration of 'tender' family attachments was the second most frequent attribute included in male obituaries, and it was the second highest too for women. It would appear that familial authenticity was fundamental for both sexes.

12% of the qualities listed for men were mentions of being benevolent, giving to the poor, or being generally deemed charitable. Of the total women's attributes, on the other hand, 17% were mentions for having charitable largesse. The discrepancy between the sexes might be reflected in the fact that this was an attribute that was often accorded to single or widowed women as their main – if not only – positive public attribute and, indeed, their *raison d'être*. For example, marking the death of Mrs Elizabeth Woolmer, the paper noted that she was, "a gentlewoman who for above 40 years showed herself a widow indeed, by relieving the distressed, and diligently following every good work."<sup>17</sup>

The pie charts above give a strong indication of the broad sweep of desired, gendered qualities in the mid-to-late eighteenth century. To give a more granular view, Table 9.1 shows the numerical frequency of gendered necrological merits, quality by quality and decade by decade. This table reflects the data of each bundle of 25 gendered obituaries for each sex in each ten-year period. Hence it gives some indication of underlying changes in fashions for different virtues.

The amplitude of "sincerity" as a prerequisite social value for men is clearly shown in Table 9.1, while its negligible importance for women is also plainly

16 Joanne Bailey, "A Very Sensible Man": Imagining Fatherhood in England c. 1750–1830," *History*, 95 (2010), pp. 267–292.

17 *Norwich Mercury*, 27 February 1773.

visible. In the 1790s, for instance, the gap is highly significant. Here, no women were deemed to have this characteristic, whereas 16 out of the 25 male obituaries examined mentioned sincerity.

The gender divide is also evident in the presence of clearly articulated Christian virtues and/or a propensity for piety. Having been more equally distributed between the genders in 1760 and 1770, the virtue of piety shifts and increasingly becomes a female virtue, with a rise in female attribution and a rapid drop as a recorded male virtue. An evangelical zeitgeist alone could not account for the discrepancy between the sexes, and this survey perhaps bears out Olwen Hufton's point that there was "some redistribution of virtue" from men to women during the early modern period.<sup>18</sup>

In the third line of the table we clearly witness the diminishing inclusion of 'moral virtues' over the period. This may indicate either an increased sophistication, as more individualistic obituaries became the vogue, or that, more likely, such turns of phrase were superseded by adjectives that conferred a more specifically religious zeal (on women at least) as the century progressed. Similarly, perhaps for men 'moral virtue' became weighted tacitly into their facility to be sincere, and to exercise integrity and honesty. That the deceased was held in great esteem, or was well respected within the community, once more appears to be a dramatically decreasing value in association with men, with zero allusions in the obituaries analysed for the 1790s. Again this attribute may have become redundant by being subsumed within an alternative virtue, perhaps increasingly seen as an assumed by-product of the masculine qualities of honesty, sincerity, and integrity.

To be dubbed a warm, affable, or an amiable character, again appears to be less important for men. As the table reveals, these attributes were, throughout the period, more widely valued as a female characteristic. It was mentioned overall in 12 of the male obituaries, and in 34 of the female obituaries scrutinized. However, where women were more frequently described as having amiable qualities than men, it could be considered that men made up for this (apparent) social deficiency by being 'tender' or 'indulgent' parents, affectionate husbands, and/or dutiful loving sons (their second most important quality after sincerity). While these private, domestic, loving roles held a sustained importance for women across the period, and barely fluctuate, that it became an increasingly compelling factor by which men were to be measured is unmistakably exposed in the table above. Fourteen of all the obituary notices of the last decade of the century mention this attribute in men, compared to only

18 Olwen H. Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe: Volume One 1500–1800* (London: Harper Collins, 1996), p. 506.

four in the 1760s. It is perhaps, for men, the growing significance of being seen as leading an exemplary life in the private sphere that eclipsed the urgency to be publicly acknowledged as being ‘respected’ in the public one. Indeed, all other virtues appear to be sacrificed at the high altar of domestic harmony; even men’s public munificence shrinks to oblivion as a trait to be noted by the close of the century. Again, one might interpret this as another area where there are signs of a transfer of a gendered virtue from men to women.<sup>19</sup>

Fig. 9.6 compares the maverick factor of female ‘good sense’ or ‘excellent understanding’ with the manly virtue of industry.

Although the numbers here are comparably very small indeed, the praiseworthy acknowledgment that (some) women had ‘good understanding’, declined from four mentions in the 1760s to none in the 1790s, possibly because, by then, female reason was more generally assumed to be the case and did not need to be highlighted. The depressing alternative – that women were all universally deemed nincompoops – is not indicated by other evidence. Individual obituaries dedicated to high-profile erudite and ‘accomplished’ women, over time, became more commonplace.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, the women in the

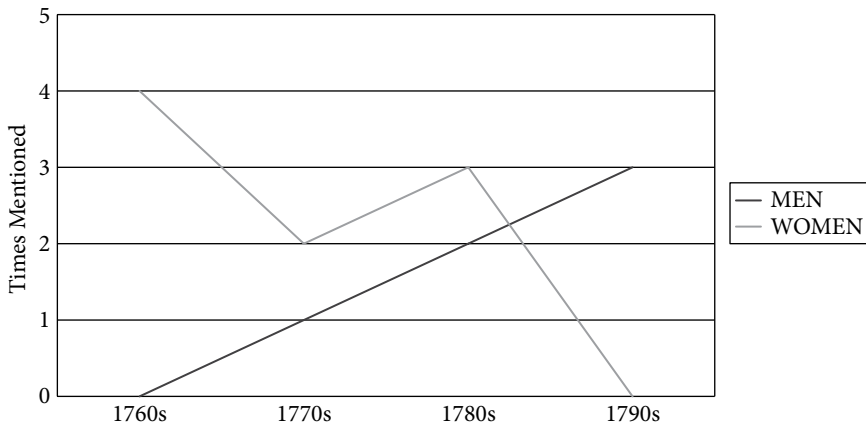


FIGURE 9.6 *Male industry versus female good sense*

19 Ibid.

20 See for example the obituary to Mary Wollstonecraft in the *Norwich Mercury*, 23 September 1797. An extraordinary local example in the same year was the obituary to “Dame Letitia Guild” which extended to over 700 words and celebrated both her private qualities and her public influence, which, it claimed, was of international importance. While posterity has not favoured Guild with a lasting reputation, clearly she was a colourful character whose passing demanded attention. *Norwich Mercury*, 24 June 1797. For



obituaries studied here, were almost never given the quality of being called hard-working. If women did work for financial remuneration, as many of them must have done, it was almost never mentioned on their demise.<sup>21</sup> To which should be noted the few exceptions – literary figures, school teachers, ale or coffee-house proprietors – whose roles were sometimes mentioned, such as the late Mrs Wildier in Exeter, “who for many years has, with great reputation, kept the coffee-house, known by the name of *Moll’s coffee house*, in the churchyard.”<sup>22</sup> Yet while female skills or talents were noted on occasions, their enterprise or industry was not. Conversely, although hardly a substantial figure numerically, mention of the fact that a man ‘worked hard’ in his chosen profession, business, or trade, slightly increased over the period. Stephen Reeve (see Fig. 9.7) receives a mention because his industry set him apart from his social roots.

Although numerically less substantial than the full forty-year ‘number crunched’ pie charts, considering the frequency of individual virtues decade by decade (as in Table 9.1), offers exciting hints to underlying trends. More work is required to bear out these findings in other provincial locations, and

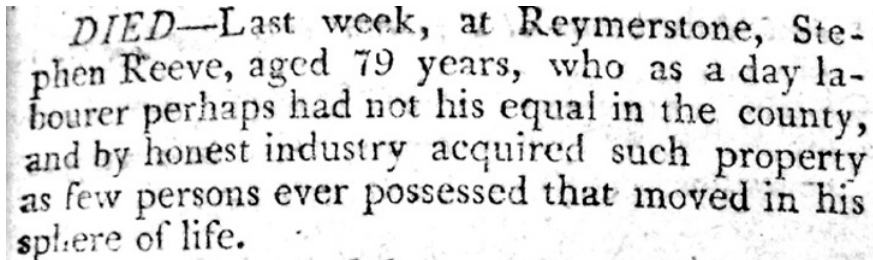


FIGURE 9.7 Death notice celebrating “honest industry.” *Norwich Mercury*, 13 May 1797.  
Image courtesy of Norfolk County Council Library

further examples of high profile female obituaries see Howard, “A bright pattern to all her sex,” pp. 230–250.

- 21 Hannah Barker affirms the high probability that, “throughout the century, substantial numbers of women, whether single or married, went out of the home to work for wages.” Hannah Barker, “Women, Work and the Industrial Revolution: Female Involvement in the English Printing Trades, c. 1700–1840” in Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (eds.), *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities* (London: Longman, 1997), pp. 81–100, p. 84. See also: Peter Earle, “The Female Labour Market in London in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries,” *The Economic Review*, new series, 42 (1989), pp. 328–353; Joyce Burnette, *Gender, Work and Wages in Industrial Revolution Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 65.
- 22 *Exeter Flying Post*, 6 December 1787.

comparisons with the obituaries in the metropolis may yet expose just how important and exceptional provincial death notices are to the social historian of the middling sort.

### The Subtext of Conformity?

Before analysing the collective findings from the universal seven deadly virtues, it is worth stating that not absolutely all the obituaries examined consisted of wholly laudable attributes. Yet the exception seems to still prove the rule. Here is a rare example where an obituary, albeit thinly veiled, was not altogether complimentary about the deceased, thereby giving us not only a greater feel for the 'real' man, but also a different insight into some gendered attitudes. It was not just lengthier than the typical notice, at over 200 words, but personal. Dedicated to one Dr Bartholomew Dey of Wymondham, it is worth quoting in full:

His cheerful and friendly disposition, gentleness of manners, and engaging urbanity, attracted the regard of all who conversed with him. His practice, which, as a physician, was safe, judicious, generous and humane, might have been more lucrative to himself, as well as more extensively beneficial to others, had not the too fond restraint of maternal tenderness, co-operating with his own truly filial piety, induced him, in his early days, to contract the sphere of his utility; and to confine his attention to the more retired, but not less amiable duties, of social endearment in private life. – Meanwhile the genteel competence of an easy fortune, and the consequent remisness of an active exertion, contributed, not a little, in his latter days, to debilitate the faculties of his mind, and enervate the powers of his body; which, otherwise (temperate as he was) might have continued to exert themselves with sprightliness and vigour, to the latest period of old age. – This privilege having been denied him, his friends are at once led to antedate their regret, and to console themselves for his loss, by the soothing consideration of his now happy release. – He died a bachelor;<sup>23</sup> an instance which may teach us, that the conjugal union

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23 Even if evident in other biographical information offered, few obituaries examined stated categorically, as here, that the man was a "bachelor." Any pejorative inference is unknown; however, Samuel Johnson talked of the "unsettled thoughtless condition of the bachelor." See: "The unhappiness of marriage caused by irregular motives of choice" in *The Rambler*, in *Three Volumes* (London: 16th ed., 1810), vol. 1, no. 18, p. 118. Vickery opines:

(however perfective) is not always, absolutely necessary to humanize the soul, and to make it susceptible of the finer feelings of nature.<sup>24</sup>

Reading it you are left in no doubt that Dr. Dey was, in modern parlance, a 'Mummy's boy'. Furthermore, that the author frowned on his indolence and wasted talents brought about by not needing to earn his living, was clear, Dey being said to having been in possession of an "easy fortune." Similarly clear was the disapproval of Dey's frittering away potentially useful life skills by enjoying an extensive social life. The author's voice is freighted with middling principles; it has all the authority here, and has no compunction in pointing out the downside of the elite lifestyle. Therefore, a lack of industry was cause for disapprobation; worse still, in Dey's case it was put down as the cause of his senility by debilitating "the faculties of his mind." Before his mental and physical deterioration, Dr. Dey had clearly been viewed as a friendly, sensitive, urbane, gentle soul. This was so palpable that he managed to achieve that level of refined humane fine-tuning without having to enjoy/suffer a "conjugal union" which was, by 1778, seen as a central positive agency in knocking the edges off the roughest male diamond.<sup>25</sup> Yet, in the process of exalting him for not needing a woman's influence (apart from his mother's), the author still manages to condemn him with, not faint, but perhaps too much praise: implying perhaps he was too 'effeminate' in his level of responsiveness. Here then was a man whose filial devotion was not in question, nor was his warmth and affability, yet the absence of sincerity, piety, moral virtues, respect, charity (mindful too of his aforementioned shortage of industry), is not merely an act of accidental omission by the author – but one of purposeful commission. But then, the poor

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"Unmarried men were never subject to the vicious ridicule heaped on old maids, but criticism of the selfishness of perpetual bachelors was quietly consistent"; Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), see esp. chapter 2; p. 77.

24 *Norwich Mercury*, 6 May 1780.

25 See Robert B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society, 1650–1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?* (London and New York: Longman, 1998), p. 35; Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500–1800* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), chapter 16. For the positive, then negative, influence of female 'frenchified' manners on men, and the gendered conflict between politeness and sincerity, see Michèle Cohen, "Manliness, Effeminacy and the French: Gender and the Construction of National Character in Eighteenth-Century England" in Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen (eds.), *English Masculinities 1660–1800* (London and New York: Longman, 1999), pp. 44–61, esp. 58–61.

doctor presumably did not have any close relatives left to make sure all those boxes were ticked.

This unusual example proves the rule in two distinct ways. First it subtextually acknowledges the very same virtues that are highlighted in my survey as being universally sought after and desirable. More significantly perhaps is that the tone of the authorial voice affirms the middling imperatives contained in these obituaries: offering an oblique critique of elite indolence and an implicit celebration of public duty and work ethic.

### Binary Contrasts, or Something More Subtle?

Obviously the most dramatic findings in terms of binary contrasts in this survey are those that show men to be sincere and women to be pious. It cannot be denied that within my research these traits emerge as the most gender-defining qualities of the period. On the surface they reflect and support the well-worn and much challenged structuralist 'separate spheres' debate. Here, many historians of the eighteenth century identified two separate spheres of influence – increasingly prevalent within the emerging middle classes – that were the preserve, almost exclusively, of one sex or the other. Put simply, men were seen to seek approbation in the public sphere, which included going out to work, civic duties, and political interaction. A woman's domain, meanwhile, was private. This is largely interpreted to mean domestic authority, which encompassed the running of and care for the household and family, neighbourly good will, and local charitable largesse.<sup>26</sup> Yet the whole area of distinctive spheres is historically fraught: it demands navigating a path made up of our own understandings of what constituted and what limited the private and public, spatially as well as lexigraphically; in addition to their conceptual positioning as opposites.<sup>27</sup> Take for example, piety in women. On the one hand, piety suggests submission to a greater authority, acquiescence, obedience, and subordination. And, as such, it is often taken to be a private virtue. However, the hagiographical manner in which piety was framed in these obituaries set these women on a pedestal, and awarded them (as well as pious

26 See Philippe Aries and Georges Duby (eds), *A History Of Private Life*, 5 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987–1991), esp. vol. 3.

27 Klein outlines the pitfalls of the use of separate spheres as a dichotomous tool for historians, see Lawrence E. Klein, "Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century: Some Questions about Evidence and Analytic Procedure," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 29 (1995), pp. 97–109.

men, not least ministers) considerable authority. Exactly how private piety as a virtue was perceived to be, especially when the practical arm of Christianity was measured in charitable activities outside the domestic sphere, makes it a contested area for definition within the framework originally set out by Roger Chartier *et al.* In other words, once recognized, and ostentatiously vaunted, piety cannot be perceived as private, that is, discreet, or limited to a household context.

Even if the frequency of these virtues might have been predictable as a part of the separate spheres matrix, my research reveals the surprising notion that domestic affection seems such a key requisite of manly qualities. Its ascendancy over the forty years, as an increasingly important quality for men to have possessed, was marked. Again this confuses any clear delineation, for men, of a hierarchy of virtues that privileged the 'public' over the 'domestic' sphere. Thus, yet again distinctions between the two putative 'separate' spheres become blurred. Indeed one might argue that all virtues, perhaps especially piety and sincerity, worked in a seamless validating synergy with the warmer human traits of being a considerate, affectionate partner, parent, or child. No man (or woman for that matter) was a complete, rounded human being, without *a priori* attending to his family relationships and responsibilities. External achievements – signified by respect and esteem – appear to pale into insignificance in the face of affectionate individualism. This chimes with recent research from Joanne Bailey, who makes a persuasive case for the ubiquitous influence of the culture of sensibility on men, as well as women. Bailey argues that this dynamic especially coloured the ideological image of the valorized father in the late Georgian period.<sup>28</sup> Calling on poetic, pictorial, fictional, and didactic representations of fatherhood, she asserts that, "in an age that celebrated feeling," the quality of "tenderness" was seen as having "the potential to revivify both individual and society."<sup>29</sup> Moreover, 'tender father' was an expression that collapsed emotional with material provision and simultaneously tempered old concepts of stern patriarchal authority into something more benign – a relationship negotiated through love, kindness, and reason, as well as provision. Consequently, filial duty, also highly prized in these obituary notices, was incited through the bonds of love. While the editorial rhetoric surrounding the culture of sensibility may be absent in provincial newspaper copy *per se*, corroboration of the prevalence of that same culture is borne out in the frequent use of the word 'tender' in association with familial

28 Bailey, "A Very Sensible Man," pp. 267–292; esp. p. 287.

29 Ibid., pp. 275–277.

relationships for both men and women in obituary notices.<sup>30</sup> Whatever the hidden cultural and societal impetus for tender fathers and husbands in these provincial obituaries, there can be little doubt of the import of domestic tenderness as the century closed.

Nietzsche stated that: "Every philosophy conceals a philosophy too; every opinion is also a hiding-place, every word...a mask."<sup>31</sup> What also needs to be kept in mind is that with prescription comes proscription. For instance, for men, celebrating piety, and projecting it upon women as 'their' virtue, may have assuaged, channelled, and managed men's fear of female perfidy. Likewise exalting men's talent for integrity and sincerity and their ability to perform affective domestic relations, immediately marginalizes everything from drunkenness to indolence and domestic violence. In other words, these virtues do not simply represent unilateral patriarchal imperatives; that there was an area of arbitration between the genders is hinted at by the, albeit apparently silent, voice of women in this 'negotiated' area.

This chapter has offered some insight into the nature and purpose of eighteenth-century obituaries for the 'middling sort', as found in the provincial presses of Exeter and Norwich 1760–1800. It has identified universal cardinal virtues within these notices and looked at the gendered relational nature of those virtues, while noting some striking changes in the values lauded over the period. Of the original four aims outlined at the start of the chapter, there remains a final objective to consider, namely, the significance obituaries had in shaping male and female identities. What this survey has revealed is that both masculinity and femininity were being gradually reconceived, reconfigured, and reshaped in the eighteenth century, and furthermore, that this was contingent upon, in part, the dissolution of the vertical gendered hierarchy. For both genders there was, at the same time, a conjoining of identity in the consolidation of class. Alternatively, it could just as legitimately be argued that the very structure and nature of the gender relationship was the cornerstone that shaped the middle class. Either way, horizontal distinctions would increasingly define and dictate intra-class gender roles, virtuous imperatives, and

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30 The argument that sensibility was overarching in all domestic relations at this time calls into question the praise of 'good sense' in women. If 'good sense' actually related not to common sense/good understanding, as taken here, but to the 'culture of sensibility' then, although insignificant in number, its diminishing reference in these obituaries may also be telling. Further research is required in other locations/other contexts before firm conclusions can be drawn.

31 Friedrich W. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 173.

expectations. In turn, class could insulate, shield and protect its members; it could also (depending on the subject's gender) limit or widen a person's opportunities.

The evidence for class solidarity coming together in a convergence of values can be found in the nature of the obituary discourse itself. Of course, this newspaper discourse was an over-blown fiction, not a gravy stain in sight. Obituaries were not a reflection of reality – a life lived – but of an amplified aspirational invention of a 'super reality'. It was a refashioning of the old maxim into 'say about others as you would have said of yourself'. Yet, the fact that this discourse was a fiction makes it more, not less, revealing. While these obituaries had been robbed of political and sectarian ideology, they were pregnant with their own, new, bourgeois ideology. They appear to be a hymn to middling virtues and gave the middling sort the moral high ground, much of which was achieved by both genders singing from the same hymn-sheet. This was not self-consciously political, but it was righteous. While simultaneously democratizing these virtues, they also became, in effect, non-negotiable: the value of virtues could not easily be argued against. Thus, here was a significant area of what Pierre Bourdieu dubbed "cultural capital,"<sup>32</sup> where the elite were stymied in their quest to "innovate constantly to maintain cultural distance from the middling."<sup>33</sup> Moreover, this process, perhaps, facilitated a discourse where 'righteous' would become the new 'political'. For the emerging eighteenth-century bourgeoisie, it would seem death had a discrete and potent dominion, a fictional place in which to show-case their most cherished ideals and which helped shape their identity. It gave them a 'virtuous' cultural hegemony, and ironically – collectively at least – an immortality they could not have anticipated.

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32 Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction" in Richard K. Brown (ed.), *Knowledge, Education and Cultural Change* (London: Tavistock, 1973).

33 Jonathan Barry and Christopher Brooks, *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550–1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994), p. 19.





**PART 4**

*News in Literary Forms*





## “This Straunge Newes”

*Plague Writing, Print Culture, and the Invention of News in Thomas Dekker's The Wonderfull Yeare (1603)*

*Viviana Comensoli*

Thomas Dekker's contributions to news pamphleteering include a series of plague books dealing with the outbreaks of epidemic that ravaged London between 1603 and 1627. In *The Wonderfull yeare*, his first prose work, Dekker provides a semi-documentary account of the effects of the 1603 pestilence on Londoners. Following his prefatory remarks to the reader, in which he describes the pamphlet writer's precarious role in a marketplace dominated by the whimsicality of the book trade, he chronicles the events of the plague year through a complex narrative that interweaves eyewitness reportage with fictional and perversely comic tales of individuals who have been directly affected by the epidemic. Dekker's narrative approach speaks to the tenuous distinction between reporting and storytelling that underwrites early modern news pamphlets, a technique that contributed to the low cultural status of the pamphlet. In an effort to forestall any objections to his plague book's mingling of eyewitness reporting and storytelling, Dekker explains the origins of news in report or rumour, which, following classical precedents, he equates with fiction-making. Asserting the artificiality of the distinction between fact and fiction, Dekker implicates his plague book in the variable nature of discourse that underwrites early modern print culture.

### Early Modern Plague Writing and the News Pamphlet

In their collection of interdisciplinary approaches to the representation of plague from the Byzantium to the Baroque periods, Franco Mormando and Thomas Worcester write that “from earliest antiquity,” plague, whether in bubonic form or any other type of acute epidemic disease resulting in calamity, “was one of the enduring facts of everyday life on the European continent,” and among “the most important influences on the development of that continent's society and culture.”<sup>1</sup> During the medieval and early modern periods, from the initial catastrophic appearance of the Black Death in 1347/48, and for

1 Franco Mormando and Thomas Worcester (eds.), *Piety and Plague: From Byzantium to the Baroque* (Kirkville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2007), preface, p. xi.

the next four hundred years, plague became a prevalent subject in art, literature, and extra-literary discourses. In England, outbreaks of plague occurred intermittently between 1348 and the 1660s. Particularly virulent outbreaks were centred in London in 1603, 1625, 1630, 1636, and 1665, causing widespread suffering and annihilation and profoundly affecting the cultural life of the city. Plague writing in England had been gaining momentum since the mid-sixteenth century, and proliferated in the early seventeenth century when it entered the repertoire of numerous kinds of printed matter, exploiting for contemporary audiences the opportunities made possible by the increase in literacy and the development of print culture.<sup>2</sup> The causes of plague remained elusive, giving rise to a spate of publications offering medical advice, spiritual and moral reflection, and social commentary, as well as journalistic and eyewitness accounts that appealed to readers' interest in the experiences and responses of their contemporaries. Plague texts ranged from pamphlets, ballads, play-texts, broadsheets, jest-books, and lyric poetry, to jeremiads and prayer sheets, plague remedies, almanacs, dialogues, and chapbooks. The official plague orders and the weekly London Bills of Mortality have increasingly been included by scholars in the roster of early modern plague writing.<sup>3</sup> In her wide-ranging exploration of the representation of disease in early modern England, Margaret Healy observes that the "cultural heritage" of the plague discourse is located in "the way the contending 'voices' (élite, popular, medical, religious, political and poetical) constructed and articulated the plague experience for their times and their culture."<sup>4</sup>

Among the vast array of print that was disseminated on the subject of plague, pamphlet literature produced the most comprehensive account of

2 On the proliferation of the plague discourse in early modern England, see Paul Slack, *The Impact of Plague in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), pp. 23–25; Philip Seargeant, "Discursive Diversity in the Textual Articulation of Epidemic Disease in Early Modern England," *Language and Literature* 16.4 (2007), p. 329; Margaret Healy, *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England: Bodies, Plagues and Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 50–122; Ernest B. Gilman, *Plague Writing in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), *passim*; and Rebecca Totaro (ed.), *The Plague in Print: Essential Elizabethan Sources, 1558–1603* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2010), introduction, p. xi.

3 See Sharon Achinstein, "Plague and Publications: Ballads and the Representation of Disease in the English Renaissance," *Criticism*, 34. 1 (1992), pp. 27–49; Gilman, *Plague Writing*, pp. 27–70; and Erin Sullivan, "Physical and Spiritual Illness: Narrative Appropriations of the Bills of Mortality" in R. Totaro and E. Gilman (eds.), *Representing the Plague in Early Modern England* (New York and London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 76–94.

4 Healy, *Fictions of Disease*, pp. 63–64.

pestilence and its effects.<sup>5</sup> As has been frequently observed, the prose pamphlet flourished during times of national crisis or calamity, sudden and devastating shifts in economic or political conditions, and other disruptions in society. During epidemics, the London theatres, which were the chief employers of professional writers, were forced to close, and playwrights often turned to other genres, most notably the prose pamphlet. Pamphlet-writing, notes Lawrence Manley, was largely the work of the new urban professionals writing "from the literary-social margins of the burgeoning metropolis," who promoted an innovative vernacular prose, counterbalancing the Latin prose tradition with "the colloquial idiom of tavern, marketplace and theatre."<sup>6</sup> Pamphlets ranged from works of piety, pedagogy, and self-improvement, to polemic and current news. By the 1590s, news pamphlets were in high demand, as readers were eager to learn about the most current developments at home and abroad. The "zeal in purchasing news pamphlets," writes Paul Voss, "suggests a prevailing interest in current affairs"; the "news quartos [...] constitute [...] a type of discourse capturing a variety of concerns important in late-Tudor England."<sup>7</sup> From the 1590s to the 1630s, plague pamphlets became a staple in the book trade's exploitation of domestic news.

Pamphlets dealing with pestilence began to appear with notable frequency in 1603, the year in which London experienced the most virulent outbreak of plague of the decade.<sup>8</sup> Thomas Dekker's *The Wonderfull yeare. Wherein is*

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5 "The term 'pamphlet,'" writes Tessa Watt, can "be used in a neutral bibliographical sense as a short unbound book, but in popular usage it often has connotations of a topical, 'ephemeral' subject matter," *Cheap Print and Popular Piety 1550–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 264. By the 1580s, the two aspects of the term had become inextricable. Joad Raymond notes that as "the meaning of the word 'pamphlet' coalesced with frequent use [...] it came to refer to a short, vernacular work, generally printed in quarto format, costing no more than a few pennies, of topical interest or engaged with social, political, or ecclesiastical issues," *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 111–112. On the increasing popularity of pamphlet literature towards the end of the sixteenth century, see Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, p. 57; Sandra Clark, *The Elizabethan Pamphleteers: Popular Moralistic Pamphlets 1580–1640* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983), p. 27; and Seargeant, "Discursive Diversity in the Textual Articulation of Epidemic Disease in Early Modern England," p. 329.

6 Lawrence Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 355.

7 Paul J. Voss, *Elizabethan News Pamphlets: Shakespeare, Spenser, Marlowe, and the Birth of Journalism* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2001), p. 14.

8 From 1486 to 1604, a total of 153 tracts (primarily medical) written in English were printed, twenty-three of which dealt exclusively with plague, and numerous others of which included

*shewed the picture of London, lying sicke of the Plague* was among the most widely read plague books in its time, and the one most frequently reprinted in ours. Dekker's first prose work – and his first in a series of semi-documentary news pamphlets on the plague that besieged London intermittently between 1603 and 1627 – *The Wonderfull yeare*, was probably written during the summer of 1603 and was printed in the late autumn when the epidemic was reaching its end.<sup>9</sup> In modern scholarship, *The Wonderfull yeare* has been praised for its complex narrative structure and trenchant exploration of the 1603 epidemic's impact on the city of London and its inhabitants. Michael Neil has described Dekker as "the plague's most eloquent English chronicler," a view echoed by Ian Munro for whom Dekker is "the preeminent Jacobean plague writer." John Twyning has noted Dekker's crafting in *The Wonderfull yeare* of an "intricate relationship between the city, writing, imagination, and fact," and Lawrence Manley has commended Dekker's "mastery of heterogeneous modes of

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references to the epidemic; during the plague years 1603 and 1604 alone, as many as twenty-eight books were produced on the subject. From 1625 to 1627, when another major outbreak of plague occurred in England, the number of relevant publications was thirty-six (Slack, *Impact of Plague*, pp. 23–24). On the plague books that were printed during and immediately following the plague years 1592/3, 1603, 1625–27, and 1630, see also Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, pp. 7–8. On the virulence and social impact of the 1603 plague, see Slack, *Impact of Plague*, p. 13; Leeds Barroll, *Politics, Plague, and Shakespeare's Theater: The Stuart Years* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 100–116; and Richelle Munkoff, "Contagious Figurations: Plague and the Impenetrable Nation after the Death of Elizabeth" in Totaro and Gilman (eds.), *Representing the Plague in Early Modern England*, pp. 97–112.

- 9 The pamphlet was initially published anonymously sometime before 5 December 1603. It went through at least three editions within a short period of time, with some irregularities attending its original publication: according to the Stationers' Register entry of 5 December, each of the printers was required to pay a fine of ten shillings "for printinge a booke called the wonderfull yere without Auctoritie or entrance, contrary to thordonnances for pryntinge," and to surrender any remaining copies in their possession. See E. Arber, *A Transcript of the Register of the Company of Stationers of London; 1554–1640 AD*, 5 vols (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1967), vol. 2, p. 837. The reasons either for the fines or for the confiscation of remaining copies have never been determined. On the dates and circumstances surrounding the original publication history, see F.P. Wilson (ed.), *The Plague Pamphlets of Thomas Dekker* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), pp. 220 and xxix–xxxiv; E.D. Pendry, "Notes of Sources and Texts" in E.D. Pendry (ed.), *Thomas Dekker: 'The Wonderful Year,' 'The Gull's Horn-Book,' 'Penny-Wise, Pound-Foolish,' 'English Villainies Discovered by Lantern and Candlelight' and Selected Writing* (London: Edward Arnold, 1967), pp. 311–313; Cyrus Hoy, "Thomas Dekker" in Fredson Bowers (ed.), *Dictionary of Literary Biography Volume 62: Elizabethan Dramatists* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1987), pp. 60–61, 67–68.

composition," which elicits "the ambiguous, provisional quality of the 'natural' meanings the city may be seen to represent."<sup>10</sup> Dekker's approach to plague writing, the book trade, and the dissemination of news warrants more critical attention. Scrutinizing both the precarious role of the writer in the print marketplace and the complex process of transforming information into news, Dekker affirms the absence of a clear distinction between reporting and storytelling, or between history and fiction, deliberately implicating his plague book in the instability of oral and printed discourse that underwrites early modern culture.

### "To be a Man in Print": Dekker and the Book Trade

Dekker's work as a playwright, notes Kathleen McLuskie, demonstrates "the eclecticism of a professional career" that pursued London's "shifting commercial opportunities, crossing the boundaries between elite and popular theatre venues and companies."<sup>11</sup> Over the course of his career, Dekker was also extensively engaged in the pamphlet trade, writing over twenty pamphlets in prose and three in verse. In England, as John Feather has illustrated, the marketing of books had by the 1580s become a flourishing and profitable enterprise, and the

10 Michael Neil, *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 18; Ian Munro, *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 176; John Twynning, *London Dispossessed: Literature and Social Space in the Early Modern City* (London: Macmillan, 1998), p. 8; Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London*, p. 357. Eric Wilson contends that *The Wonderfull yeare* is "one of the most notable descriptions of the groaning city," in which Dekker "characterizes with blunt immediacy" the "torturous changes in [the] commonwealth," see "Plagues, Fairs, and Street Cries: Sounding out Society and Space in Early Modern London," *Modern Language Studies*, 25.3 (1995), p. 8. Ernest Gilman argues that from a literary point of view Dekker's *The Wonderful Year*, *Newes from Graues-ende*, and *A Rod for Run-awaies* are the "most notable" of the plague tracts printed in London during and subsequent to the 1603 epidemic, see *Plague Writing in Early Modern England*, p. 137. Rick Bowers extols as "unprecedented" Dekker's "ironic narrative strategy" in the epilogue of *The Wonderfull yeare*, *Radical Comedy in Early Modern England: Contexts, Cultures, Performances* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), p. 38. Healy characterizes Dekker's pamphlet literature in general as "accomplished literary productions" that have "de[fi]ed] post-Enlightenment attempts to categorize and order them" and deserve "re-evaluation and a more prominent place in literary history," *Fictions of Disease*, pp. 99, 12.

11 Kathleen E. McLuskie, *Dekker and Heywood: Professional Dramatists* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p. 3.

notion of the author who wrote for profit had taken hold, together with the commodification of the printed text.<sup>12</sup> With the steady decline in England's patronage system, many writers felt the pressure to produce timely and saleable reading matter. As book publishing increasingly came to depend upon a broad spectrum of readers and upon authors' participation in the production of books that catered for rapidly changing tastes and fashions, publishers and book sellers mediated between writers and readers, a role that, as Feather observes, "is the very essence of publishing."<sup>13</sup> Despite the widespread appeal of print, however, it remained generally in disrepute in elite circles, which continued to privilege literary genres. News and other kinds of pamphlets continued to be stigmatized for their interest in popular, ephemeral subject matter, increasing the competitive pressures placed on authors and sparking the convention whereby those who wrote or referred to pamphlets were expected to disassociate their work from that of others. Ben Jonson, for one, often complains about the pecuniary interests of authors and publishers in the dissemination of books on topical subjects, and of readers' unquenchable thirst for news. In his masque *News from the New World Discovered in the Moon*, a printer declares:

I am all for sale, gentlemen [...]. I am a printer and a printer of news, and I do hearken after 'em wherever they be, at any rates; I'll give anything for a good copy now, be't true or false, so't be news.<sup>14</sup>

Like the work of most professional writers in late Elizabethan and Jacobean England, Dekker's pamphleteering was susceptible to the continual flux of the marketplace. In *The Wonderfull yeare* and in a number of subsequent prose works, Dekker engages in the complaint voiced by many of his fellow writers against opportunistic booksellers and authors, and indiscriminating readers. In the address "To the Reader" in *The Wonderfull yeare*, he describes the challenges attending his efforts "*To be a man in print*" in a world in which "*Custome*" requires "Booke-sellers" to lure not only the "ranck-riders of Art," who lack

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12 John Feather, *A History of British Publishing* (1988; rpt. London and New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 26–27.

13 Ibid., p. 28.

14 Ben Jonson, *News from the New World Discovered in the Moon* in Stephen Orgel (ed.), *Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), p. 293. On the ambivalence towards print culture in early modern England, see Clark, *Elizabethan Pamphleteers*, p. 27; Feather, *History of British Publishing*, p. 26; Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, p. 57.



"*Gentilitie*," "*Ciuitly*," and "*Learning*," and "dayly flye, humming" over their "Stalls," but also many "good wits" who "dishonor not only their *Calling*, but euen their *Creation*, [...] because of a little false glistering."<sup>15</sup> Dekker emphasizes that his dispute is "not with your good Poets" (p. 5) but with those "whose crest is Pen-and-Inckhorne" (p. 2), and with "*Word-pirates*" (p. 6) and others who "mainteine the scuruy fashion[s]" of the book trade (p. 4). In *Jests to Make You Merry* (1607) he reiterates the complaint, declaring that:

Bookes are a strange commoditie [...]. Go to one [bookseller] and offer a copy, if it be merrie, the man likes no light Stuffle, if sad, it will not sell. Another meddles with nothing but what fits the time[.]<sup>16</sup>

In *Lantern and Candlelight* (1608/09) he also disparages "this printing age of ours" as responsible for the incessant production of books, regardless of their aesthetic merits, a phenomenon that in turn feeds inferior writers' thirst for profit:

Two sorts of *mad-men* trouble the *stationers* shops in *Paules Church-yard*: they that out of a *Meere* and *Idle vaine-glory* will euer be *Pamphleting* (tho their bookes beeing printed are scarce worth so much *Browne paper*) [...]: Of the other sort are they that beeing free of *Wits Merchant-venturers*, do euery new moon (for gaine onely) make 5. or 6. *voiages* to the *Presse*, and euery Term-time (vpon *Booksellers stalles*) lay whole litters of blinde inuention: fellowes that [...] spit nothing but ynck, and speake nothing but *Poeme*.<sup>17</sup>

Although partly formulaic, Dekker's disparagement of the practices of the book trade inspired some of his most poignant satirical observations. In *The Wonderfulfull yeare* he points to the volatility that underpins the writer's role in the marketplace, and puns on the analogy between the printing press and an instrument of torture:

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- 15 Thomas Dekker, *The Wonderfulfull yeare* in F.P. Wilson (ed.), *The Plague Pamphlets of Thomas Dekker* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), pp. 4–7. Further references to the text are to this edition and are given in parentheses.
  - 16 Thomas Dekker, *Jests to Make you Merrie* in Alexander B. Grosart (ed.), *The Non-Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, 5 vols (London, 1884–1886; rpt. New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), vol. 2, p. 271.
  - 17 *Lanthe and Candle-light* in Grosart (ed.), *Non-Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, vol. 3, p. 178.

For he that dares hazard a pressing to death (thats to say, *To be a man in print*) must make account that he shall stand [...] to be beaten with all stormes [...] indur[ing] to see his lines torne pittifully on the rack: suffer his Muse to take the *Bastoone*, yea the very stab, & himselfe like a new stake to be a marke for euery *Hagler* [...].

pp. 4–5

The thrashers of “*Good*” writing (p. 5) include the “*Satin-gull*,” the “*Puritanicall Citizen*” and his “*Indeede-la*,” and the “*narrow-eyd Critick*” with his “*Aconited sting*” (p. 4).

Dekker nevertheless avows to tolerate readers’ and critics’ shortcomings, asserting that their censure will make his writing even more appealing to discerning readers, who appreciate “a deseruing labour”:

Yet would I haue these Zoilists (of all other) to reade me, if euer I should write any thing worthily, for the blame that knowne-fooles heape vpon a deseruing labour does not discredit the same, but makes wise men more perfectly in loue with it.

p. 7

Yet beneath the bravado, Dekker betrays his anxiety about the reception of his work, as well as his own opportunistic role in the marketplace, acknowledging that the detractors are also readers (and purchasers of books), a readership upon which he depends as a professional writer.

### Invention and Dekker’s Wonder Pamphlet

Although plague writing reaches back to antiquity, its evolution from the classical age through to the eighteenth century reveals a striking thematic consistency with regard to the plague’s origins and its devastating effects. The four dominant themes of the plague discourse, all of which inform *The Wonderfulle yeare*, revolve around (1) the widespread suffering and social instability brought about by plague; (2) the association between miasma (noxious air particles) and pestilence; (3) the view of pestilence as a manifestation of divine retribution and as a sign of the need for moral reform; and (4) the debate concerning whether it is appropriate to act out of self-preservation and to escape an epidemic that is the result of divine punishment.<sup>18</sup> The continuity that underwrites

18 Gilman describes the early modern plague discourse as a series of “meditations in an emergency,” a “vast and repetitive outpouring,” *Plague Writing in Early Modern England*,

the plague discourse stemmed in large part from the elusiveness of a disease that, until the nineteenth century, had rendered contemporary medicine powerless in determining its cause.<sup>19</sup> Although uniform in their thematic approach to epidemic disease, early modern plague books, like other contemporary news pamphlets dealing with topical subject matter, could nevertheless demonstrate originality by combining traditional themes with eyewitness reporting, fictional anecdotes, dramatic situations, and authorial speculation.

Having assured the reader that his writing is on the side of the "Army of Poesy" (p. 5), Dekker presents a plague narrative in which he sustains the theme of contingency and variability as conditions that permeate "this altring kingdom" (p. 14), including its textual practices. Announcing that his method is "to paint and delineate to the life the whole story" of the year 1603 by means of "that sacred Aromatically-perfumed fire of wit (out of whose flames *Phoenix* poesie doth arise)," and soliciting "Sorrow and Truth" to "lend [him] Art" (pp. 26, 19), he combines eyewitness reporting with the point of view of the dramatist, poet, and storyteller, producing a plague book that is both a "report" and a "picture of *London*, lying sicke of the Plague" (p. 12, title page). Describing the subject matter of a book as "that which [...a writer] presents vpon the Stage of the world," Dekker constructs, in the manner of a play complete with "Prologue" and "Epilogue," the "Map of a Countrey so pitifullie distracted by the horror of a change" (pp. 5, 13). The Prologue's task is to report on the death of Queen Elizabeth in March, the first in a series of momentous events for which "that title of wonderfull is bestowed vpon 1603" (p. 19). The account of the effects of Elizabeth's death on the nation is bracketed by epigrammatic and elegiac verses in which allegorical figures "step up" to "the Stage," to commemorate the Queen's reign and to "act" out the "feares [...] bred in [...] this altring kingdome," during a year in which one "wonder begat more" (pp. 13–14, 20). The "stage" then shifts to "this straunge newes" of the "wonder" that closed the year, namely "a most dreadfull plague" (pp. 29, 20), which Dekker personifies as an "Inuader" who "plaide the tyrant" and who appeared everywhere "in such strange, and such changeable shapes" (pp. 33, 37). "I am amazed," exclaims Dekker, "This was a rare world" (pp. 33, 34).

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p. 57. On the thematic continuity of the plague discourse, see also Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribner's, 1971), chaps. 7 and 8; Slack, *Impact of Plague*, pp. 24–25; Thomas N. Corns, "Literature and London" in David Lowenstein and Janel Mueller (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 544; and Totaro (ed.), *The Plague in Print*, introduction, pp. xi–xii.

19 On the general anxiety in the early modern period about the powerlessness of medicine to explain the causes of plague, see Healy, *Fictions of Disease*, p. 55.

Dekker's solicitation of "Sorrow and Truth" to assist him in "paint[ing] and delineat[ing] [...] the story" of the year's "strange" events (the word "strange" occurs thirteen times in the pamphlet), echoes the early modern news or wonder pamphlet's emphasis on the relation between strangeness and truth. Titles of pamphlets about wonders often include the announcement that the contents are "strange and true," a convention that led Ben Jonson in his preface "To the Readers" in *The Staple of News* to condemn "published pamphlets of news [...] made all at home" for having "no syllable of truth in them."<sup>20</sup> As Patrick Collinson observes, however, "the word 'true' was a slippery commodity" in the early modern period, and the terms "story" and "history" were generally "interchangeable."<sup>21</sup> Philip Sidney, in the *Apology for Poetry* (1580), describes the historian's search for truth as invested in hearsay:

The historian [...], loaden with old mouse-eaten records, authoriz[es] himself (for the most part) upon other histories, whose greatest authorities are built upon the notable foundation of hearsay[.]<sup>22</sup>

Sidney had advocated for the poet's "profitable invention," arguing that "as in History looking for truth" the seekers:

go away full fraught with falsehood, so in Poesy looking but for fiction, they shall use the narration but as an imaginative ground-plot of a profitable invention.<sup>23</sup>

Although strangeness in the early modern period was generally considered suspect, audiences, as Joad Raymond points out, also recognized that it was "complementary to truth" and that it "could indicate that a true story was expressly significant."<sup>24</sup> In some news pamphlets, stories or anecdotes that are clearly beyond the writer's knowledge are added to eyewitness accounts; in

20 Anthony Parr (ed.), *Ben Jonson: The Staple of News* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 153.

21 Patrick Collinson, "History" in Michael Hattaway (ed.), *A New Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, 2 vols (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), vol. 1, p. 56.

22 Geoffrey Shepherd (ed.), *Sir Philip Sidney: An Apology for Poetry or The Defence of Poesy*, 3rd edn., revised by R.W. Maslen (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 89.

23 Ibid., p. 103.

24 Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, pp. 114, 113. On the tenuous distinction between fact and fiction in early modern news pamphlets, see also Malcolm Gaskill, "Reporting Murder: Fiction in the Archives in Early Modern England," *Social History*,

other pamphlets, writers who wish to deflect the charge of fabrication mix detailed reportage with accounts by witnesses whose authenticity cannot be verified, making it impossible to differentiate between fact and representation.

In *The Wonderfull yeare* Dekker underscores the importance of literary invention, together with the humanist obligations of *imitatio* and *aemulatio*. In his address "To the Reader," he declares that his complaint is "not with your good Poets," who are versed in the classical tradition (p. 5), as is his plague book, which is replete with Latin phrases, citations from classical texts, and allusions to classical authors, myths, tropes, and theories. And in the opening sentence of his account of the plague year, in which he looks back to the onset of the spring, he invokes a *locus amoenus* or idyllic setting with distinct Ovidian overtones emphasizing the process of change and transformation:

*Vertumnus* being attired in his accustomed habit of changeable silke, had newly passed through the first and principall Court-gate of heauen: [...] on [he] went [...] with all the wooden rabble of those that drest Orchards and Gardens, perfuming all the wayes that he went, with the sweete Odours that breath'd from flowers, hearbes and trees, which now began to peepe out of prison: by vertue of which excellent aires, the skie got a most cleare complexion. [...] the Sunne likewise was freshly and verie richly appparelled in cloth of gold [...]. for ioy whereof the Larke sung at his windowe euery morning, the Nightingale euery night [...].

pp. 9–10

A term derived from the Latin term *vertere*, meaning "to change," *Vertumnus* (the name of the god of gardens and fruit trees and ruler of the seasons and change) has the power to alter his shape at will.<sup>25</sup> The literary source for the figure is Ovid's original tale of Vertumnus and Pomona (*Metamorphoses*, Book 14). Sarah Annes Brown observes that "direct retellings" of Ovid's work "flourished" in medieval and Renaissance literature, in which "allusions to his poems became a pervasive literary presence."<sup>26</sup> As in all of the tales in the

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23 (1998), pp. 1–30; Susan C. Staub, *Nature's Cruel Stepdames: Murderous Women in the Street Literature of Seventeenth Century England* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2005), pp. 3–100.

25 In his ground-breaking study of Dekker's prose pamphlets, Frederick O. Waage noted that the figure of Vertumnus emphasizes humanity's disregard of the permanence of change; *Thomas Dekker's Pamphlets, 1603–1609, and Jacobean Popular Literature*, 2 vols (Salzburg: Universität Salzburg, 1977), vol. 1, p. 61.

26 Sarah Annes Brown, *The Metamorphosis of Ovid: From Chaucer to Ted Hughes* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), p. 2. In early modern England, the *Metamorphoses* was made

*Metamorphoses* in which Ovid invokes the traditional topos of the sensuous garden, the setting becomes the site of violence or destruction, an idealized landscape belying impending danger. Similarly, Dekker's idyllic picture of London in the spring of 1603, when the City was graced with "sweete Odours that breath'd from flowers, hearbes and trees," shifts to "The Map of a Countrey [...] pitifullie distracted by the horror of a change," following the news of the Queen's death (p. 13).

Echoing Ovid's description of the natural world as continually "altring" (*Metamorphoses*, Book 15, l. 279), Dekker develops an original plague narrative around the "chances, changes, and strange shapes that this Protean Climactericall yeare hath metamorphosed himselfe into" (p. 19). The abrupt "alteration of a State" that followed Elizabeth's death is like an "Earth-quake" for the English people, who had not until now "vnderstoode what that strange, outlandish word *Change* signified"; and everywhere one looks, one discovers "nothing but distraction: the whole Kingdome seemes a wildernes, and the people in it are transformed to wild men" (pp. 12–13), as witnessed by "Ciuill Sedition, Vprores, Rapes, Murders, and Massacres" (p. 20). The proclamation of King James I, whom Londoners call Apollo and the healing physician of London, restores order to the kingdom, but the celebration abruptly ceases when plague forces the coronation's delay: "Night walks at the heeles of the day, and sorrow enters [...] now againe in a moment alter[ing] that gladnes to shrikes & lamentation" (p. 25). The chief shape-shifter, the "nimble [...] Sicknes" (p. 39), is the "wonder" that upstages even the future King himself in the drama of this perpetually changing society (p. 14).

### **"A Certaine Mingled Troope of Strange Discourses": Rumour and the Dissemination of News**

Having recounted the final "Tragicall Act" of the year 1603, namely the "horror" of the plague's assault (pp. 28–31), Dekker invites the reader to witness

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widely available through Arthur Golding's verse translation, the first four books of which were published in 1562 and the complete fifteen-book edition in 1567. Dekker's familiarity with Ovid is suggested by his frequent allusions to Ovidian texts in his pamphlets and plays. Notable examples include the marginalia in Dekker's *Lantern and Candlelight* (1608), which consist of frequent direct citations or paraphrases of verse from the *Metamorphoses* and other Ovidian works, and the allusion to Ovid's Mermidons (from the tale of Plague at Aegina, in *Metamorphoses*, Book 7) in Dekker and Jonson's city pageant *The Magnificent Entertainment: Thomas Dekker, The Magnificent Entertainment* (London, 1604), sig. B3<sup>r</sup>. Dekker knew Latin, and may also have read Ovid in the original.

additional strange occurrences, in the form of "*a mery Epilogue to a dull* [i.e. "gloomy" or "sad"] *Play*" (title page). Comprising over one third of the pamphlet, the epilogue, which Dekker describes both as a series of "Reports" and as "a certaine mingled Troope of strange Discourses, fashioned into Tales" (p. 8), consists of perversely comic stories, in the tradition of the jest-book, about the experiences of ordinary Londoners during the epidemic. The tales include that of a beautiful bride who was rumoured to have been struck by plague during her wedding ceremony and died shortly thereafter, a tale that Dekker explains as being about:

a strange alteration, for the Rosemary that was washt in sweete water to set out the Bridall, is now wet in teares to furnish her burial.

p. 46

In another tale, a group of "Coffin-cutters" who had discovered a "new-found trade" are seen profiting from the calamity (pp. 39, 59). The final tale concludes a series of brief satirical vignettes about the cruelty and inattentiveness of well-to-do Londoners towards the poor: the tale concerns "a poore wretch," who in the morning had been "throwne (as the fashion is) into a graue vpon a heape of carcases, that stayd for their complement," and who "was found in the afternoone, gasping and gaping for life" (p. 61).

Anticipating the objections of some readers that in the often bizarre and satirical "Reports" that comprise the epilogue he may have "either slipt too farre, or falne too short" in their "spredding," causing those readers to "cauill" (i.e. find fault with) "or complaine of iniury" (i.e. "hurtful or offensive speech or words" [*OED* 2: *injury*]), Dekker, in a second prefatory address, had asked the reader to "beare with the error," explaining that the tales originated on the "tongue" of "onely flying Report":

Know, that the intelligence which first brought them to light, was onely flying Report: whose tongue (as it often does) if in spredding them it haue tript in any materiall point, and either slipt too farre, or falne too short, beare with the error, and the rather, because it is not wilfully committed. Neither let any one (whome those Reports shall seeme to touch) cauill, or complaine of iniury, sithence nothing is set downe by a malitious hand.

p. 8

Dekker's defence of the epilogue speaks to the slippery distinction between report, rumour, and fiction. From the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the

term “flying” referred to the action “Of a tale, rumour, etc.: Circulating without definite authority” (*OED* 5.a: *flying*); from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries, the meanings of the noun form of “report” included “Rumour” or “common talk” (*OED* 1.a: *report*, n.), and the verb form included the action of “relat[ing], narrat[ing], tell[ing], giv[ing] an account of (a fact, event, etc.)” (*OED* 1.a: *report*, v.). Inspired by the “tongue” of “flying Report,” Dekker’s “mingled Troope of strange Discourses” is thus to be taken as a series of tales or rumours, originating in common talk, with no specific source or clear authority. Dekker further entreats the reader to make allowance for any perceived “error,” since all factual information becomes fiction as soon as it is conveyed and is rendered meaningful only in the telling.

Dekker’s defence of the epilogue, together with his reassurance that “nothing is set downe by malicious hand,” speaks to the broader cultural anxiety about the connection between report and rumour. Walter Ong has pointed out that although early modern Europe maintained “the relationship of print to the orality still residual in writing and early print culture,” print nevertheless exerted “subtle [...] effects [...] on consciousness” in that it permitted, among other significant developments, the dispersion “of knowledge as never before”; print “made universal literacy a serious objective, [...] and otherwise altered social and intellectual life.”<sup>27</sup> As a result, knowledge and information, as Keith Botelho writes, were “no longer in the domain of the wealthy, educated, or the elite, for the poor, uneducated commoner could just as readily hear the latest news from at home or afar”; and although information reported in print was often considered to be authoritative, it was not perceived to be immune to corruption by rumour.<sup>28</sup> A rumour, or broadly circulated report not based on clear evidence or fact, was seen to contain “the seeds of both truth and falsity,” and in creating doubt about the authenticity of socially sanctioned truth, rumour rendered truth unstable.<sup>29</sup> The early modern preoccupation with rumour, hearsay, and false information precipitated a cultural debate that encompassed an extensive textual range, indicating widespread awareness of the fragile distinction between rumour and truth. A significant case in point is the Elizabethan news pamphlet chronicling the devastating effects of civil war. In his study of the war pamphlets, Paul Voss observes that the “various prefaces and epilogues [...] inserted by printers and publishers in the news quartos,” inscribe “an ongoing

27 Walter Ong, *Orality and Literature: The Technologizing of the Word* (1982; rpt. New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 115–116.

28 Keith M. Botelho, *Renaissance Earwitnesses: Rumor and Early Modern Masculinity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 12. See also Voss, *Elizabethan News Pamphlets*, p. 4.

29 Botelho, p. xiii.



and intense discussion over fact and conjecture, truth and falsehood, reliability and rumor," a debate that "marks the birth of English journalism."<sup>30</sup>

The early modern preoccupation with the instability of rumour, together with its portrayal in the figure of Fama (Rumour), has its roots in classical representations. Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* were particularly influential in this regard. Virgil's Rumour is a monster who flies with swift wings and has millions of mouths, each of which "is furnished with a tongue" that spreads "disastrous news" and "mingles truth with lies."<sup>31</sup> Especially significant to Dekker's defence of the tales in his epilogue as originating in "flying Report" is the figure of Rumour as depicted in the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid focuses on Rumour's dwelling, which is a boundless place at the centre of the universe where silence is unknown and where the hum of voices never abates. In Golding's translation, the doors of Fama's dwelling:

stand open nyght and day[...]  
The house is all of sounding brasse, and roreth every way,  
Reporting dowble every woord it heareth people say.<sup>32</sup>

Countless truths and lies "ronne gadding every where," as words "confusely flye in heapes" (XII. 58–59). Rumour thus remains unverifiable:

Bruit [rumour] that loves to tell  
Uncertayne newes uppon report, whereof he dooth not knowe  
The author.

XII. 65–67

And as listeners recount indiscriminately whatever they have heard, the original fiction grows, with each author adding something new:

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- 30 Voss, *Elizabethan News Pamphlets*, p. 4. Ton Hoenselaars notes that in a variety of Renaissance humanist representations, Rumour "hovers between fact and fiction, between literature and news, or between literature and history," see "Rumour, News and Commerce in Ben Jonson's *The Staple of News*" in M.T. Jones-Davies (ed.), *Rumeurs et Nouvelles au Temps de la Renaissance* (Paris: Editions Klincksieck; Université de Paris-Sorbonne, Société Internationale de Recherches Interdisciplinaires sur la Renaissance, 1977), p. 145.
- 31 Howard Clarke (ed.), *Virgil's Aeneid and Fourth ('Messianic') Eclogue in the Dryden Translation* (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), Book IV, ll. 264, 271.
- 32 John Frederick Nims (ed.), *Ovid's Metamorphoses: The Arthur Golding Translation 1567* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), Book XII, ll. 49–51. Further references to the text are to this edition and are designated by book and line numbers in parentheses.

And ever by the way  
The thing that was invented growes much greater than before,  
And every one that getts it by the end addes sumwhat more.

XII. 61–63

For Ovid, the spread of rumour, like the process of storytelling, speaks to the protean nature of all discourse. Dekker's account of the 1603 plague, like Ovid's poem, is informed by a narrative structure that perpetually shifts: in genre and mood, from eyewitness report to drama and jest, and from the tragic and mournful to the comic and macabre, underscoring the tenuous distinction between reportage and storytelling. Implicating his plague book in the "mingled discourses" that underwrite early modern culture, Dekker affirms the role of contingency in human history, including textual practice.

# English News Plays of the Early 1620s

*Thomas Middleton's A Game at Chess and Ben Jonson's  
The Staple of News*

*Lena Steveker*

## Theatre, Politics and the News Business in the Early 1620s

Hitting the stage of the Globe Theatre in August 1624, Middleton's *A Game at Chess* instantly became news. Its fervently anti-Spanish as well as anti-Catholic satire was, according to the letter-writer John Chamberlain, “followed with extraordinary concourse and frequented by all sorts of people.”<sup>1</sup> Thousands flocked to the Globe where the King's Men played to a packed house for an unprecedented nine-day period, before the play was eventually banned from stage upon the indignant intervention of the Spanish Ambassador.<sup>2</sup> This “veritable nine days' wonder”<sup>3</sup> of early modern English theatre is a political play, not only because it caused diplomatic tensions between England and Spain,<sup>4</sup>

1 Quoted in Gary Taylor, “*A Game at Chess*: An Early Form” in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. by Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 1776.

2 Having witnessed a performance on 11 August, John Holles describes the Globe as having been “so thronged that by scores they came away for want of place,” see “John Holles, Lord Haughton to the Earl of Somerset, Wednesday 11 August 1624” in Thomas Middleton, *A Game at Chess*, ed. by T.H. Howard-Hill (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 198. The Spanish ambassador reports that “there were more than 3000 persons there [in the Globe] on the day that the audience was smallest,” see “Don Carlos Coloma to the Conde-Duque Olivares, Tuesday [10] 20 August 1624” in Middleton, *A Game at Chess*, ed. Howard-Hill (1993), p. 194. Taylor assumes that, “[i]n nine days in August 1624, *A Game at Chess* was seen by perhaps one-seventh of the total population of London, and many more who did not see it heard about it, or heard the ‘extraordinary applause’ and ‘extraordinary concourse’ of its audiences” (Gary Taylor, “*A Game at Chess*: A Later Form” in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, p. 1825). For a detailed account of the reactions the play provoked see T.H. Howard-Hill, *Middleton's “Vulgar Pasquin”: Essays on “A Game at Chess”* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995), pp. 99–104.

3 Middleton, *A Game at Chess*, ed. Howard-Hill (1993), introduction, p. 1.

4 For an outline of the diplomatic tensions surrounding *A Game at Chess* see Richard Dutton, *Licensing, Censorship and Authorship in Early Modern England. Buggeswords* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 139–146.

but also because it originated in the context of the Anglo-Spanish conflicts at the onset of the Thirty Years' War, which focalized in the Spanish Match and the Bohemian crisis.<sup>5</sup> Its particular historical context also makes *A Game at Chess* a play that is linked to the burgeoning news industry of the 1620s and its conflicted relationship with the English Crown.

By the early 1620s, news publications had become increasingly popular with English readers.<sup>6</sup> As the country was more and more involved in the escalating conflicts on the European Continent, demand increased for foreign news, that is, news about events abroad as well as about the Crown's foreign policy.<sup>7</sup> Information of this kind became available, for example, in letters exchanged between politically informed correspondents as well as in subscribed newsletters written by professional letter-writers. Foreign news also circulated in print publications which widely extended the dissemination of news along both vertical and horizontal lines within English society. Information about English involvement in international affairs was thus no longer restricted to a small political elite, but became accessible to a growing number of readers across different social strata. News was reported in polemical pamphlets often published anonymously and, since 1620, in the news-sheets known as corantos,

5 See Taylor, "A Game at Chesse: An Early Form," p. 1773. For a more detailed contextualization of Middleton's play within the English-Spanish crises of the early 1620s see T.H. Howard-Hill, Middleton's "Vulgar Pasquin," pp. 77–92.

6 The following necessarily brief overview of the forms and circulation of news in the early 1620s is based on Fritz Levy, "The Decorum of News" in Joad Raymond (ed.), *News, Newspapers, and Society in Early Modern Britain* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), pp. 12–38; Fritz Levy, "Staging the News" in Arthur F. Moretti and Michael D. Bristol (eds.), *Print, Manuscript, Performance: The Changing Relations of the Media in Early Modern England* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2000), pp. 252–278; Joad Raymond (ed.), *News Networks in Seventeenth-Century Britain and Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006); Michael F. Suarez and H.R. Woudhuysen (eds.), "Newsletters" in *The Oxford Companion to the Book*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), vol. 2, p. 965.

7 The onset of the Thirty Years' War was not the first time an English public took an interest in foreign news. For example, "there [was] suddenly a group of at least a dozen tracts [i.e. news pamphlets] published in 1562, when an English expeditionary force, intended to help the Huguenots, crossed the Channel" (Levy, "The Decorum of News," p. 18). The late Jacobean age, however, witnessed not only a quantitative increase in, but also qualitative changes to news publications. During this period, Susan Clegg argues, "English interest in a war that spread from Bohemia to the Palatinate and Hungary joined with nationalistic concerns about both Princess Elizabeth's safety and Prince Charles's marriage to a Catholic princess to create a market for news persistent enough to warrant reports that came first with intermittent regularity and then, later, on a weekly basis." *Press Censorship in Jacobean England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 170.

the first issues of which were printed in Amsterdam and illegally imported to England. In short, “[n]ews had become, for the first time, a routine commodity,”<sup>8</sup> making political knowledge available to a wider reading public. This process of democratizing information about England’s dealings in foreign affairs was strongly opposed by James I who regarded all questions of royal policy as belonging to the sphere of *arcana imperii*, his “prerogative or mystery of State.”<sup>9</sup> In order to stop the proliferation and circulation of political news, James issued “A Proclamation against excesse of Lavish and Licentious Speech of matters of State” (24 December 1620), commanding his:

loving Subjects [...] to take heede, how they intemeddle by Penne, or Speech, with causes of State, and secrets of Empire, either at home, or abroad, but containe themselves within that modest and reverent regard, of matters, above their reach and calling, that to good and dutifull Subjects appertaineth[.]<sup>10</sup>

However, the proclamation failed to take effect, as did a second one issued six months later, and, by the end of 1621, the Crown had changed its tactics.<sup>11</sup> Instead of attempting to suppress political news, the king henceforth tried to control its dissemination by issuing royal patents for corantos to be printed and published in England.<sup>12</sup> “These, however, were,” as Fritz Levy remarks:

now registered by the Stationers’ Company after passing the censor – that is they were subject to all the usual controls exercised by the Crown over material printed in England, and so were preferable to unconstrained imports.<sup>13</sup>

With these licensed corantos, the serial publication of printed news began, reflecting on the increasing availability of news and political opinion to the reading public.

8 Taylor, “A Game at Chesse: An Early Form,” p. 1776.

9 George McIlwain (ed.), *The Political Works of James I*. Reprinted from the edition of 1616 (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), p. 332.

10 James F. Larkin and Paul L. Hughes (eds.), *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), vol. 1, pp. 495–496.

11 See Levy, “Staging the News,” p. 266.

12 See *ibid.*, p. 266. For more detailed information on the history of the English coranto see Folke Dahl, *A Bibliography of English Corantos and Periodical Newsbooks 1620–1642* (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1952).

13 Levy, “Staging the News,” p. 266. For a close analysis of Jacobean censorship see Clegg, *Press Censorship in Jacobean England*.

It is the theatre's reaction to the burgeoning news business on which I will focus in the remainder of this chapter. English theatre had been involved in staging news long before the advent of printed, serialized news publications. However, "until the 1620s, stage plays customarily dealt with topical matters."<sup>14</sup> As Paul J. Voss argues, the parallels that, for example, can be found between Christopher Marlowe's play *The Massacre of Paris* (written c. 1590–93) and a news pamphlet of June 1590 (reporting a failed attempt to assassinate the French King Henry IV) illustrate "the ease with which events in France could move from page to stage – news from one day became the drama of the next."<sup>15</sup> Another example of how the stage made use of news prior to the 1620s is John Fletcher's and Philip Massinger's *The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnavelt* (1619), a dramatic rendering of the trial and execution of the Dutch politician Johan van Oldenbarnavelt. This play, which Fritz Levy calls a "staged news-book,"<sup>16</sup> was first performed less than three months after the events had been reported in English news publications.<sup>17</sup> In contrast to these plays by Marlowe, Fletcher, and Massinger, news plays such as Thomas Middleton's *A Game at Chess* (1624) and Ben Jonson's *The Staple of News* (1626) engage in more complex discussions of contemporary English news culture, as I will show in this chapter. Going beyond issues of topicality, both Middleton's and Jonson's plays are concerned, each following its own ideological agenda, with negotiating the intricate links between politics, news culture, and the theatre of the 1620s.<sup>18</sup>

### Thomas Middleton's *A Game at Chess*

*A Game at Chess* takes the form of an allegorical chess game in which the White House, representing the English court, defeats the Black House, representing the Spanish court, by revealing the latter's moral conceit and corruption.

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- 14 Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 139.
  - 15 Paul J. Voss, *Elizabethan News Pamphlets: Shakespeare, Spenser, Marlowe and the Birth of Journalism* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne, 2001), p. 115.
  - 16 See Levy, "The Staging of News," p. 259.
  - 17 See *ibid.*, pp. 257–259.
  - 18 My discussion of Middleton's *A Game at Chess* and Jonson's *The Staple of News* as news plays forms part of a larger research project in which I focus more extensively on the relationship between theatre and news culture in early modern England between 1620 and 1660. I want to thank Joachim Frenk and the members of his research colloquium for the helpful and encouraging comments they made during a project presentation in the early summer 2010.

On the level of allegory, Middleton's play negotiates and contains the cultural anxieties of its time as it has English-Protestant virtuous integrity unveil Jesuit treacherous plotting and defeat Spanish-Catholic moral corruption. *A Game at Chess* is also a topical play which invited contemporary audiences to identify its characters as the leading members of both the English and the Spanish royal families and their respective courts.<sup>19</sup> It brings on stage a decidedly English reinterpretation of the Spanish Match in which the White Knight's revelatory visit to the Black House transforms Prince Charles's ill-advised trip to Madrid into a heroic act of rescuing Protestant England from Popish Spanish plots. *A Game at Chess* is indeed staunchly patriotic in its celebratory representation of the White House. But since it is not the White King (representing James I), but the White Knight (representing Prince Charles), who eventually saves his house, scholars have often read Middleton's play as voicing criticism of James I in particular, and of Stuart absolutist ideology in general. As Margaret Heinemann argues, *A Game at Chess* is an example of Jacobean "opposition drama"<sup>20</sup> which criticizes James's attempts to enter into a dynastic alliance with Spain by presenting him as an honourable, but nevertheless weak king who is lured in by the plots of his Spanish and Jesuit adversaries.<sup>21</sup> For Albert H. Tricomi, Middleton's play "dramatize[s] the views of vociferous critics of crown policy."<sup>22</sup> According to him:

The White King's failure of leadership and his inability to recognize or cope with the threats to the commonweal are tantamount to an indictment of James.<sup>23</sup>

Gary Taylor sees Middleton's satire as relying on a strategy of "unravelling by repetition." In its allegorical chess game,

kings, dukes, and bishops [are present] on both sides; one hierarchy mirrors the other. But one side represents an evil which the audience rejects.

19 See "John Holles" and "Don Carlos Coloma" in *A Game at Chess*, ed. Howard-Hill (1993), pp. 199, 193–194.

20 Margaret Heinemann, "Drama and Opinion in the 1620s: Middleton's and Massinger" in J.R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring (eds.), *Theatre and Government Under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 238.

21 Ibid., p. 243.

22 Albert H. Tricomi, *Anticourt Drama in England 1603–1624* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), p. 140.

23 Tricomi, *Anticourt Drama*, p. 148.

Thus, there can be no intrinsic dignity or authority in bishops or dukes or kings, who may, as individuals, be either good or bad, worthy of obedience or deserving of disrespect.<sup>24</sup>

According to Taylor, *A Game at Chess* attacks royal as well as episcopal authority and, consequently, “champion[s] an ideology of resistance” against Stuart absolutism.<sup>25</sup>

Compelling as these readings are, I would however argue that the play’s critical negotiation of absolutist authority does not so much depend on its allegorical use of chess as on its complex engagement with the burgeoning news business of its time. *A Game at Chess* criticizes the dissemination of political information by vilifying the commodification and circulation of the written word in both manuscript and print. Both manuscript writing and print publications figure prominently in the plots the Black House sets up in order to corrupt and thus defeat the White House. For example, after the White Queen’s Pawn has only narrowly escaped being raped by the Black Bishop’s Pawn,<sup>26</sup> the Black Knight successfully convinces the White House that her justified accusations are after all false.<sup>27</sup> He does so with the help of forged letters which provide the perpetrator with a fake alibi for the time of the assault.<sup>28</sup> The Black Knight procures yet another fake letter to entice the (White) Fat Bishop to betray the White House by converting to Catholicism.<sup>29</sup> Letters also form a central part of the Black House conspiracy to establish a “universal monarchy,”<sup>30</sup> that is a global Catholic empire which, as commonplace prejudice had it, Spain sought to build with Jesuit support.<sup>31</sup> As the Black Queen’s Pawn explains, spies have been placed at various European courts whose “important secrets | Of state” they reveal in “notes of intelligence” to the Jesuit “Father General.”<sup>32</sup> While the Black Knight’s forged letters serve to question the overall

24 Taylor, “*A Game at Chess: An Early Form*,” p. 1778.

25 Ibid., p. 1777.

26 Thomas Middleton, “*A Game at Chess: A Later Form*” in Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (eds), *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 1830–1885, ii.i.9–149. All references to *A Game at Chess* (henceforth *Game*) are to this edition.

27 *Game* ii.ii.94–224.

28 *Game* ii.i.182–85; ii.ii.197–204.

29 *Game* ii.ii.72–81; iii.i.24–58.

30 *Game* i.i.51, 244.

31 See *A Game at Chess*, ed. Howard-Hill (1993), introduction, p. 34. Also see *Game*, note to i.i.56.

32 *Game* i.i.57–61.



reliability of the written word, the dispatches sent by the Jesuit agents are a direct reference to Jacobean news culture. Similar to (either privately or professionally written) newsletters, the Black House “notes of intelligence” circulate information that is deemed secret. As it is with the help of their spies’ correspondence that the Black House works towards its global empire (which would entail the destruction of the White House), *A Game at Chess* seems to suggest that the dissemination of political news violates the monarch’s *arcana imperii* and, consequently, endangers the commonweal.

The criticism which Middleton’s play inflicts upon print media is likewise severe. The White Queen’s Pawn, who symbolizes virtue and innocence, equates the “hot-burning [...] syllables” of the words the Black Bishop’s Pawn speaks to her, with “letter[s] new cast from hell.”<sup>33</sup> Since the term *letters* refers not only to the elements of the alphabet, but also to printing type, *A Game at Chess* represents print publications as Satanic devices signifying Popish attacks on Protestant truth and morality. The play underlines this negative association between print products and the Catholic Church as the White Queen’s Pawn describes her adversary’s letter as having been “cast from hell.” Thus, the Black House missive appears to have been issued by the Devil and, at the same time, it is associated with the process of producing metal printing type by casting, which also shares in the White Queen’s Pawn’s hellish description.<sup>34</sup> What is more, the play taps into the repertoire of Protestant accusations directed at Rome. The Black Knight admits to the commodification of religion when he says to his pawn:

For venting hallowed oil, beads, medals, pardons,  
Pictures, Veronica’s heads in private presses,  
That’s done by one I’t’h’habit of a pedlar,  
Letters conveyed in rolls, tobacco-balls.<sup>35</sup>

It is through lines such as these that *A Game at Chess* represents the Catholic Church as an itinerate trader, a petty dealer to whom religion is a mere commodity; its goods are available for the sums specified in the “Book of general pardons of all prices.”<sup>36</sup> In Middleton’s play, printed texts thus play a central role in the commercialized idolatry on which, according to Jacobean Protestant

33 *Game* v.ii.42–43; v.ii.44.

34 I am grateful to Puck Fletcher for alerting me to the ambiguous use of the verb *cast*.

35 *Game* iv.ii.48–51.

36 *Game* iv.ii.83.

stereotyping, the Catholic Church is grounded. The only print product that escapes this strategy of vilification is

that white book of the defence of virgins  
Where the clear fames of all preserving knights  
Are to eternal memory consecrated [...].<sup>37</sup>

As these lines show, the use of print products is not restricted to the Black House alone. However, the printed word cherished by the White House differs significantly from the texts associated with the Black House. Representing the King James Bible, the “white book” is praised as a reliable source of truth, innocence, and virtue and, thus, stands in contrast to the texts used by members of the Black House in order to further their devious plans. What is more, the “white book” is the only book owned by the White House, whereas the Black House has numerous texts at its disposal. I would therefore argue that it is not print itself that comes under attack in *A Game at Chess*, but rather the printing press as a means of pluralizing opinions and making them available to the public.

However, the critical rendering of print media in *A Game at Chess* is ironically at odds with how the play profited from its own involvement in the marketplace of print and, in particular, in the marketplace of news. For its representation of deceit and corruption in the Black House, Middleton's satire is deeply indebted to printed pamphlets reporting foreign news. As Gary Taylor argues:

Middleton's play was made *from* news. Formally, it drew upon a long tradition of anti-Catholic polemic, which ranged in substance from Donne's erudite *Ignatius his Conclave* to popular ballads and broadsides ridiculing the pope or celebrating the constancy of Protestant women [...]. Factually, though, the sources for the play's political details were not magnificent old folios of official history, but rough pamphlets about recent events.<sup>38</sup>

The most important pamphlets *A Game at Chess* draws on, and even quotes from, are Thomas Scott's anti-Spanish *Vox Populi, or News From Spain* (first published anonymously in 1620) and its sequel *The Second Part of Vox Populi* (1624); John Gee's anti-Jesuit *Foot out of the Snare* (1624); and John Reynold's

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37 *Game* iii.i.164–166.

38 Taylor, “*A Game at Chesse: An Early Form*,” p. 1776.

anti-Spanish *Vox Coeli* (1624).<sup>39</sup> However, Middleton's play not only made use of news; it, too, became a news item. The newsletter-writer John Wooley, for example, reported that *A Game at Chess* was "[a]ll the nues I haue hearde since my comming to toun."<sup>40</sup> Its status as a news item increased the profit made from the play, and the play's notoriety in turn furthered its commodification as news. With estimations varying between "£100 a day [...] or £1500 all in all," *A Game at Chess* made the "King's Men an unparalleled, scandalous amount of money."<sup>41</sup> Being transformed from a commodity of the theatre into one of the news market, *A Game at Chess* was subjected to a process of pluralization in both manuscript and print forms. As a result, Middleton's play (Figures 11.1 and 11.2).

survives in many more manuscripts than any other play of the period; it was published in more illicit editions than any other play; it was the first individual play published with an engraved title-page – and was then published again in another edition with yet another engraved title-page.<sup>42</sup>

The economic success that *A Game at Chess* met with, and the play's subsequent circulation in multiple textual forms, suggests that Middleton's satire re-enacts the media practices for which it criticizes the Black House. Its various manuscript copies and print editions undermine the very ideals of textual reliability and transcendent meaning the play privileges in the "white book." In short, *A Game at Chess* enters into a highly ambiguous relationship with the market forces of news and print: it attacks their strategies of pluralization and, at the same time, it becomes one their most successful products in the early 1620s.

### Ben Jonson's *The Staple of News*

Its ambiguous engagement with the news business of its time places Middleton's *A Game at Chess* into close proximity to the second news play

39 See Howard-Hill, *Middleton's "Vulgar Pasquin,"* pp. 49–51. See also Jerzy Limon, *Dangerous Matter: English Drama and Politics in 1623/24* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

40 "John Woolley to William Trumbull, Friday 6 August 1624" in Thomas Middleton, *A Game at Chess*, ed. by T.H. Howard-Hill (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 192.

41 Taylor, "A *Game at Chess*: A Later Form," p. 1825.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 1773.



FIGURE 11.1 *Title page of A Game at Chess (1625; STC 17884; RB 28185).*

THIS ITEM IS REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION OF THE HUNTINGTON LIBRARY, SAN MARINO, CALIFORNIA.



FIGURE 11.2 Title page of *A Game at Chess* (1625; STC 17882; RB 23674). THIS ITEM IS REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION OF THE HUNTINGTON LIBRARY, SAN MARINO, CALIFORNIA.

under scrutiny here, Ben Jonson's *Staple of News* (1626). Although Jonson's play was certainly less popular, it too vilifies the marketplace of news and print whilst also making use of it.<sup>43</sup> According to Mark Z. Muggli, "Jonson's long-standing interest in journalism," which has left its imprint on several of his poems, plays, and masques, eventually culminates in *The Staple of News*.<sup>44</sup> With its eponymous staple in which ludicrously fantastic stories are sold to gullible customers, and with its set of (mostly) ridiculous characters who are involved in either the production or the consumption of news, the play is a vehement invective against the news culture of the 1620s. Decrying the contemporary desire for news more fully and effectively than any other of Jonson's other texts,<sup>45</sup> the play's satire is directed at the commodification of news in different media.<sup>46</sup> The women who invade the stage at the beginning of the play serve as comical representations of gossip as an oral form of exchanging information which predates the market in manuscript and printed news.<sup>47</sup> Having Gossip Tattle claim that her personal network of gossipmongers provides her with better news than the products sold at the staple,<sup>48</sup> Jonson's play satirically implies that the news market does nothing but commercialize stale gossip. The newsvendor Cymbal represents manuscript news media. He:

prides himself on the fact that he is a mart for handwritten news and explains to the young Pennyboy that "when news is printed, | It leaves, sir, to be news."<sup>49</sup>

Joseph Loewenstein observantly notes that:

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- 43 The play was performed only twice, once at Blackfriars and once at the court. See, *The Staple of News*, ed. by Anthony Parr (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), introduction, p. 49.
  - 44 Mark Z. Muggli, "Ben Jonson and the Business of News," *Studies in English Literature* 32 (1992), p. 323. See also Joseph Loewenstein, "The Staple of News: Introduction" in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. by David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson, 7 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), vol. 6, p. 3.
  - 45 See Muggli, "Ben Jonson and the Business of News," p. 331; see *The Staple of News*, ed. Parr, introduction, pp. 23–49.
  - 46 See Muggli, "Ben Jonson and the Business of News," p. 333; see *The Staple of News*, ed. Parr, introduction, p. 25; Loewenstein, "The Staple of News: Introduction," vol. 6, pp. 4–7.
  - 47 See Loewenstein, "The Staple of News: Introduction," vol. 6, p. 7.
  - 48 Ben Jonson, "The Staple of News," ed. by Joseph Loewenstein in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, vol. 6, pp. 15–157, iii. Int. 15–18. All references to *The Staple of News* (henceforth *Staple*) are to this edition.
  - 49 Loewenstein, "The Staple of News: Introduction," vol. 6, p. 4 (quoting *Staple* i.v. 50–51).

the irony of the [news vendor's] remark derives from the fact that while Cymbal here speaks for a culture of private information, it was a culture that the market in news was quite obviously destroying.<sup>50</sup>

It achieved this as it made news available beyond the limits of the private sphere. The play's most severe criticism, however, is directed against printed news publications. Critics have pointed out that *The Staple of News* relentlessly satirizes corantos as well as the "pioneers of periodical print journalism – [...] above all Nathaniel Butter whose name, endlessly metamorphosed, provides the play with its most recurrent running gag."<sup>51</sup>

This vilification of printed news stands in contrast to Jonson's own reliance on the medium of print in the note "To the Readers" which he first added to *The Staple of News* for the Folio edition of his works, published in 1616. In this note, Jonson tells his readers that his play "hath hitherto been wholly mistaken," and he attempts to rectify this by interpreting "the ridiculous office of the Staple" as a representation of the age's "own folly or hunger and thirst after published pamphlets of news."<sup>52</sup> The addition of this note, which Stuart Sherman calls a "pure print intervention in the midst of a theatrical script," sits uneasily on a play that criticizes the news business and, in particular, its commerce in printed news as debilitating cultural practices.<sup>53</sup>

### Middleton and Jonson: Contrasting Ideologies of News

Similar to Middleton's *A Game at Chess*, Jonson's *Staple of News* thus displays a highly ambiguous relationship with the medium of print. In spite of this similarity, however, each play's critical discussion of news follows its own distinct ideological agenda. In the Prologue for the Court, Jonson's play characterizes news as "common follies" – that is follies of the "common" people – from which it seeks to distance itself: "Wherein, although our title, sir, be News, | We yet

50 Ibid., p. 6.

51 Stuart Sherman, "Eyes and Ears, News and Plays: The Argument of Ben Jonson's *Staple*" in Brendan Dooley and Sabrina Baron (eds.), *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 30. For similar observations see Loewenstein, "The *Staple of News*: Introduction," vol. 6, p. 4; and *The Staple of News*, ed. Parr, introduction, p. 29.

52 *Staple*, Note to the Reader, vol. 6, p. 78, ll. 8–9.

53 Sherman, "Eyes and Ears," p. 35.

adventure here to tell you none[...].”<sup>54</sup> The Prologue identifies the court as its privileged audience because it addresses its members as:

[...] scholars, that can judge and fair report  
The sense they hear above the vulgar sort  
Of nut-crackers that only come for sight.<sup>55</sup>

Favouring the ear above the eye, the play establishes a cultural hierarchy of the senses, which it imposes on the social hierarchy of class.<sup>56</sup> *The Staple of News* is thus an elitist news play whose rejection of the news business is reflected in its “peculiar embrace of aristocratic values.”<sup>57</sup>

By contrast, the ideological agenda of Middleton’s *A Game at Chess* has a more egalitarian thrust. As Ian Munro argues, the play is “obsess[ed] with discovery.”<sup>58</sup> It climaxes in a scene in which the Black House is defeated by “check-mate by | Discovery.”<sup>59</sup> Exposing the corrupted policies of the Black House to public scrutiny, the White House is able to win the day. The play’s insistence on discovery is, however, at odds with the notion of *arcana imperii* which, as I have outlined above, was an integral part of Jacobean royal policy and which the Crown sought to enforce by censorship. The play’s allegorical dramatization of Prince Charles’s visit to Spain constitutes a violation of the royal prerogative, since it exposes aspects of the Crown’s foreign policy to the scrutiny of theatre audiences.<sup>60</sup> Yet, *A Game at Chess* represents its strategy of exposing state secrets as a patriotic act serving to prevent the moral, religious, and political defeat of the White House and, by implication, England. Jacobean censorship in turn comes under attack when the Black Knight boasts that “our drifts

54 *Staple*, Prologue for the Court, vol. 6, p. 24, ll. 9–10.

55 *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 24, ll. 6–8.

56 For a detailed discussion of this hierarchy see Sherman, “Eyes and Ears.”

57 Loewenstein, “*The Staple of News*: Introduction,” vol. 6, p. 3.

58 Ian Munro, “Making Publics: Secrecy and Publication in *A Game at Chess*,” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 14 (2001), pp. 221. See also Isabel Karremann “Medial Pluralization and Censorship in the Early Seventeenth Century: The Case of Thomas Middleton’s *A Game at Chess*” in Joachim Frenk and Lena Steveker (eds.), *Proceedings: Anglistentag 2010 Saarbrücken* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2010), pp. 237–245.

59 *Game* v.iii.161.

60 See also Munro who argues: “In the context of the historical event of the play [i.e. the recent failure of the Spanish Match], the enormous popularity and scandalousness of *A Game at Chess* was caused by its publication of the alleged secret machinations and private personal details of the Spanish in England.” See, “Making Publics,” p. 208.



walk uncensored but in thought,” while the White House imposes a “silenced muzzle | On all the barking tongue-men of the time,” thus enforcing “political restraint” on any kind of opposition.<sup>61</sup> Within the logic of the play, it is therefore censorship which endangers the state authority that imposes it in order to secure its own power. With its critical negotiation of censorship and its reliance on the notion of discovery, *A Game at Chess* suggests that it is indeed vital to make political news available beyond the limits of King and Court.

In the end, however, Middleton’s play could not escape the censor. It was suspected that it would be banned from stage even before it was in fact suppressed.<sup>62</sup> Far from damaging the play’s popularity, this led to an increased demand, first for performances and then for its circulation in manuscript and print. As Gary Taylor argues, “Middleton turned the censorship of news against itself, creating a text designed to make news of censorship.”<sup>63</sup> To put it differently, *A Game at Chess* functions as a news play which stages the tensions between state authority and the news business of its time. While Jonson’s play criticizes public theatre as a space where “common follies” such as fashion and news – which the play conceptualizes as just another form of fashion<sup>64</sup> – prevent audiences from benefiting from the educational potential of the stage, Middleton’s play conceptualizes public theatre as an adequate and indeed necessary medium for disseminating political news.

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61 *Game* iii.i.100–103.

62 See Howard-Hill, *Middleton’s “Vulgar Pasquin,”* p. 99.

63 Taylor, “A Game at Chess: An Early Form,” p. 1776.

64 Loewenstein argues that in *The Staple of News*, Jonson “imagines the news as an heir to fashion, plotting an arc in the play’s first scenes as the object of satire shifts from modishness of person to modishness of data,” see Loewenstein, “*The Staple of News*: Introduction,” vol. 6, p. 7.

## “This Is Attested Truth”

### *The Rhetoric of Truthfulness in Early Modern Broadside Ballads*

Nicolas Moon

If we are to judge by the interest they aroused in the London publishing industry, there were extraordinary sights to behold in Cork in 1621, sights that inspired several pamphlets and at least two broadside ballads. Locals apparently witnessed the strange occurrence of “an vnusual multitude of birds called Stares” (starlings), who gathered near the city of Cork in order to:

fight together the most bitterest and sharpest battell amongst themselves, the like, for the manner of their fight, and for the time the battell did continue, neuer heard or seene at any time in any Country of the world.<sup>1</sup>

In an address to the reader, the pamphlet which supplies these details, *The Wonderfyll Battell of Starelings*, complains about other accounts of this spectacular sight:

so many poetically fictions haue of late passed the print, that they [i.e. the pamphlet’s audience] haue some cause to suspect almost euery extraordinary report that is printed.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to these “fictions,” the pamphlet’s narrative should be accepted as truthful since its author is in possession of:

Letters, from Right Honorable persons in Ireland where the accident fell out, to Right Honourable persons at Court, and diuers in London at this present: as also by the testimony of Right Honourable and Worshipfull persons, & others of good reputation now in London, who were eye-witnesses.<sup>3</sup>

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1 [Anonymous.], *The Wonderfyll Battell of Starelings: Fought at the Citie of Corke in Ireland, the 12. and 14. of October last past. 1621. As it hath been credibly enformed by diuers Noblemen, and others of the said Kingdome, &c.* (London: for N. B., 1622), *Early English Books Online* (hereafter *EEBO*), accessed 3 February 2012, sig. A3<sup>v</sup>.

2 *Ibid.*, sig. A2<sup>v</sup>.

3 *Ibid.*, sig. A2<sup>v</sup>.

It is hard not to suspect that, amidst the generic complaint at the quality of sensational publishing (a common technique for asserting a writer or text's own credit by comparison), the pamphlet is concerned with a particular ballad. *A battell of Birds* – or to give the ballad its full title, *A battell of Birds, Most strangely fought in Ireland, upon the eight day of September last, 1621. where neere unto the City of Corke, by the river Lee, weare gathered together such a multytude of Stares, or Starlings, as the like for number, was never seene in any age* – provides an abbreviated account of the same events.<sup>4</sup> It is easy to imagine that the pamphlet's criticism is implicitly directed at this alternative narrative owing to discrepancies in their accounts, not least the fact that they disagree on exactly when this incredible avian war is supposed to have taken place. Yet, as its closing stanza makes clear, the ballad manifests the same anxiety, equally concerned to establish its status as a truthful account, and its content as news that is worthy of a receptive audience: "What now for trueth is publisht forth | esteeme it as a newes of worth" (l. 103–104).

These truth claims, and the types of reliability claimed by both texts, are central to the concerns of this chapter. Present in both pamphlet and ballad versions of this narrative is a concern with sight. This extraordinary occurrence is defined as something which has been seen, and which can be recounted and understood only thanks to the presence of eyewitnesses. It is through the testimony of trusted individuals that the truth of this fantastical sight can be guaranteed. The basis of the ballad's truth claims is also the very fact of its having been "publisht forth," an ambiguous phrase that relates to a ballad's dual status as both an oral and printed text. The ballad is "publisht" therefore both in the sense that it is proclaimed and makes its narrative known, and in the sense that it is also disseminated to its audience through the medium of print. It implies that part of the reason the ballad should be accepted by its audience as "newes of worth," both truthful and worth knowing, lies in its being a printed, and widely circulated, text.

Ballads that provide accounts of official or military events, natural catastrophes, or miraculous happenings, appear to have a greater concern to declare and authenticate their veracity than do other examples of popular song. If an event is labelled as 'news', it not only prompts the interest of its audience within a particular context, but declares that the reported events actually occurred, and that the account being offered is truthful and reliable. Any news text, whether newspaper or ballad, contains not only linguistic but paratextual

4 [Anonymous], *A battell of Birds* (London: W. I[ones], 1621), *EEBO*, accessed 8 February 2012; Hyder E. Rollins (ed.), *A Pepysian Garland* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 150–154.

and social rhetorics which attempt to establish its truthfulness. It is obviously impossible to know the full extent to which such truth claims would have been believed by a contemporary audience. When Will Kemp disparages the “lying ballets” which he believes have defamed him in his pamphlet *Nine Daies Wonder*, his concern with his reputation is clearly partly a response to the anxiety that such lies might have been believed by the audience to which he is addressing in his text.<sup>5</sup>

This chapter explores the range of truth claims that were available to the readers of Early Modern news ballads, which aimed to establish the truth of their accounts of a variety of events deemed ‘news-worthy’ by the broadside trade. Whilst acknowledging the significance of the material text, recent work on ballads has tended to privilege the ballad as an inherently spoken or oral genre, with the printed text largely reduced to the status of a ‘container’.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, the effectiveness of many of the markers examined in this chapter is clearly the product of print. Purely in terms of the numbers produced, broadside ballads must have been one of the most widely available printed sources for news in early modern England, accessible to a broad audience owing to their relative cheapness.<sup>7</sup> Occupying a position between oral and printed media, simultaneously spoken and written, and at least by the early seventeenth century employing images alongside their narratives, the contents of broadside ballads covered a wide range of subject matter, with what has been identified as the journalistic or ‘news ballad’ outnumbering all other types.<sup>8</sup>

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5 William Kemp, *Nine Daies Wonder* (1600), ed. by George B. Harrison (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1966), p. 30.

6 See Christopher Marsh, *Music and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 225–327; Bruce Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-factor* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999), pp. 168–205.

7 Tessa Watt has plausibly estimated that up to 4,000,000 ballads could have been printed by 1600; *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 11. Purchasing a broadside was of course not the only way in which an early modern subject might conceivably come into contact with ballads, since broadsides were liable to be passed around any given community, pasted up upon walls, and circulated through oral communication.

8 *Pepysian Garland*, p. xi. Angela McShane has persuasively argued that the term ‘news ballad’ is an anachronism, the product of modern criticism, and has proposed the more taxonomic term of ‘political ballad’ for those ballads whose content is about one of what she defines as the “four basic axes, royal events; military affairs; punishment of traitors and rebels and foreign events where Protestantism was seen to be under threat from Papist or Turk.” In arguing that ballads were ‘timeless’ in their concerns, McShane relies on an assumption which sees ‘information’ as the sole concern of news, while ballads are reduced to the role of “putting an

Famously, the possibility that print could be viewed as a guarantor of a ballad's truth claims is mocked in a scene from Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. When confronted with the ballads offered for sale by the roguish ballad seller Autolycus, the innocent shepherdess Mopsa responds with the naïve statement, "I love a ballad in print, a life, for then we are sure they are true."<sup>9</sup> Adrian Johns has argued that the conviction that print was a guarantor of truth and reliability was one that initially had to be constructed by the early modern print trade in the face of considerable evidence to the contrary.<sup>10</sup> Printers and booksellers pursued a number of strategies to attest to the 'credit' and reliability of their various publications. As this chapter's opening examples indicate, this was a concern also demonstrated by what might be considered less credit-worthy works such as short pamphlets and broadsides, genres whose credibility was often called into question.<sup>11</sup>

Broadside ballad truth claims are chiefly situated in their titles and other paratexts. The simplest way for a ballad title to argue for the veracity of an event is to claim that it is true. A claim to be a 'true report' or description appears in many titles, typically when describing sensational or fantastical occurrences:

*The true reporte of the forme and shape of a monstrous Childe borne at Muche Horseleye, a village three myles from Colchester, in the Countye of Essex, the xxi daye of Apryll in this yeare 1562.*<sup>12</sup>

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argument via a moral gloss or emotional response" on an essentially oral news culture. As this chapter demonstrates, broadside ballads were not wholly oral texts but made use of elements which were the sole preserve of print. Nor is it clear that news ballads are unusual in placing events, political or otherwise, within a preconceived moral framework. See Angela McShane Jones, "The Gazet in Metre; or The Riming Newsmonger, The English Broadside Ballad as Intelligencer: A New Narrative" in Joop W. Koopmans (ed.), *News and Politics in Early Modern Europe (1500–1800)* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), pp. 131–150.

9 William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, ed. by John Pitcher (London: A & C Black, 2010), iv.iv.260–261.

10 Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998).

11 Deceitfulness was merely one of the accusations made against ballads in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as Natascha Wurzbach's compilation of representative views by contemporaries demonstrates. See *The Rise of the English Street Ballad 1550–1650*, trans. Gayna Walls (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 242–284.

12 [Anonymous], *The true reporte of the forme and shape of a monstrous Childe borne at Muche Horseleye* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1562), *EEBO*, accessed 8 February 2012; Joseph Lilly (ed.), *A Collection of Seventy-Nine Black-Letter Ballads and Broadsides, Printed in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, Between the Years of 1559 and 1597* (London: Joseph Lilly, 1867), pp. 27–30.

*The true description of two monstrous children, lawfully begotten betwene George Steuens and Marjerie his wyfe, and borne in the parish of Swanburne in Buckynghamshyre the [4th] of Aprill, Anno Domini 1566.*<sup>13</sup>

*Strange News from Brotherton in Yorke-shire, being a true Relation of the raining of Wheat on Easter day last, to the great amaizment of all the Inhabitants. [...]*<sup>14</sup>

Elsewhere the formula is applied to an account of military victory:

*A true discourse of the winning of the towne of Berke by Grave Maurice, who besieged the same on the 12 day of June 1601, and continued assaulting and skirmishing there until the last day of July, at which time the towne was yielded.*<sup>15</sup>

All four examples also demonstrate a somewhat pedantic urge, typical of many news ballads, and already illustrated by my opening example, to delineate details of place and time within their titles, so as to fix their accounts in a precise geographic and temporal space, and thereby authenticate their ballads' status as 'true' accounts.

This pedantry extends to the inclusion of apparently precise measurements. In *A newe Ballad of the most wonderfull and strange fall of Christ's Church pinnacle in Norwich, the which was shaken down by the a thunder-clap on the 29 of Aprill 1601, about 4 or 5 o'clock in the after-noone: with a description of a miraculous fire, which the verye next morning consumed and burnt downe a great part of the cloyster*, details provided in the fifth and sixth stanzas perform the same rhetorical function as the details of time and place present in the title:<sup>16</sup>

13 [Anonymous], *The true description of two monstrous children* (London: Alexander Lacy for William Lewes, 1566), EEBO, accessed 8 February 2012; *Black-Letter Ballads*, pp. 217–220.

14 [Anonymous], *Strange Newes from Brotherton in Yorke-shire, being a true Relation of the raining of Wheat on Easter day last, to the great amaizment of all the Inhabitants. It hath rained Wheate more or lesse every day since, witnessed by divers persons of good ranke and quality, as the Lady Ramsden who gathered some her selfe, some of it was sent to Judge Green, and M. Hurst dwelling at the Fountaine Taverne in Saint Anns Lane neere Aldersgate in London* (London: John Hammond, 1648), EEBO, accessed 4 June 2012; in Henry Rollins (ed.) *The Pack of Autolytus* (Port Washington and London: Kennikat Press, 1969), pp. 36–43.

15 [Anonymous], *A true discourse of the winning of the towne of Berke by Grave Maurice* in Andrew Clark (ed.) *The Shirburn Ballads, 1585–1616* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), pp. 272–276.

16 [Anonymous], *A newe Ballad of the most wonderfull and strange fall of Christ's Church pinnacle in Norwich* in *Shirburn Ballads*, pp. 204–206.

Some three score yards it was in height [...]  
 Above the steple, which (at least)  
 is fyvescore yards from ground.  
 The stone, which on the top thereof  
 (to crowne the other) lay,  
 Is thought to be a good Cart-loade,  
 as many people say.  
 Vpon the stone there stoode a crosse,  
 about three yards hye,  
 Which bare a stately wether-cocke [...]  
 The cocke was full an ell in length;  
 and in the breadth (full out)  
 Three quarters of a yarde it was;  
 syxe quarters ruond abovt.  
 ll. 37, 38–46, 48–52

Where there is room for doubt about a specific detail, the wider community is appealed to as a source of authority; that "many people say" that something is true, is sufficient reason to believe in its truthfulness. Since the dimensions of the church are exaggerated, there is even something inadvertently comic in the ballad's pretensions to detailed accuracy. For an audience which lacks either access to more accurate information, or the means of testing the ballads' claims, such details function simultaneously as truth claims as well as a means to impress through their exaggerated proportions.

Designed to advertise the ballad texts, and thus possessing an effect comparable to newspaper headlines, ballad titles such as these simultaneously function as narratives in their own right. As short as these titles are, they still provide the precise details of name, place, and date which, as Helen Smith has observed in relation to early modern imprints, are "the three key indicators on which so many fictional narratives are built."<sup>17</sup> Serving only to establish the verisimilitude of the narrative, they produce what Roland Barthes has termed "the reality effect."<sup>18</sup> Where a narrative consists only of these three details, Smith suggests, "the effect is one of absolute verisimilitude:

17 Helen Smith, "Imprinted by Simeon such a signe': Reading Early Modern Imprints" in Helen Smith and Louise Wilson (eds.), *Renaissance Paratexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 17–33 (p. 28).

18 Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect" in Tzvetan Todorov (ed.), *French Literary Theory Today: A Reader*, trans. R. Carter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 11–17.

a reality effect which renders its rhetorical or narrative effects invisible.”<sup>19</sup> Longer titles might contain more extraneous detail, but still fulfil this basic function.

As the trade developed over the course of the seventeenth century, ballad titles tended to become longer and more elaborate, fulfilling more emphatically this fictive and accrediting role. The proliferation of elaborate titles is clearly both the creation of, and a function of, print. Thus by 1661 a ballad advertises its contents as,

*A most wonderful and sad judgement of God upon one Dorothy Mattley late of Ashover in the County of Darby, within fourteen miles of the said Town of Darby; who for so small a thing as two single pennies which she was charged with the taking of from a boy, did most presumptuously with sad imprecations wish and desire, that if she had taken or stole the same, that the ground might open and she sink therein, which by her neighbours relation was an expression very common with her, but so it pleased God to deal, that upon the same words the ground did open, and she with a Tub which she was washing Lead-Oare in sunk into the ground, to the amazement of the beholders, and the ground closed again upon her, as here underneath it is more fully declared; and this was done upon the 23 of March 1660. All which may well serve for an example to all wretches of this age whatsoever, who to advance themselves by falshood, or for the trifles of this world, take to themselves assumptions, and imprecations, nay will not at all stand to forswear themselves to compass their own ends, as if there was no God or iudgment to be expected; but they may hereby take notice that some time God will punish such creatures even in this life for example sake; yet if not here, their reward will be according to their works hereafter, and none shall be able to let it.*<sup>20</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the boast that “here underneath it is more fully declared,” goes unfulfilled. The two hundred and fifty-two words of this extravagant title would never function successfully in oral circulation, nor could they work as a simple headline, to be read quickly and capture the imagination. Detached from the ballad that it nominally announces, it functions quite successfully as a narrative of the events of which the ballad text is supposed to be informing its audience. The sixteen stanzas of the ballad serve

19 Smith, “Early Modern Imprints,” p. 28.

20 [Anonymous], *A most wonderful and sad judgement of God upon one Dorothy Mattley* (London: W. Gilbertson, 1661), *EEBO*, accessed 8 February 2012.



only to recapitulate at slightly greater length a narrative that is already known.

In his analysis of the relationship between the broadside ballad and its title, Mark Booth has argued that this repetition is precisely the point, and compares ballads specifically to sensationalist journalism. The intention of such journalism is not to inform its audience of news and convey information, but rather to retail sensation, and the excitement of being part of a community that responds to a particular event in a specific manner. It is unlikely that many people would purchase a ballad in order to learn about news; rather, reading or repeating the ballad – texts that were, after all, generally sold through performance – offers a means of taking possession of existing information, of confirming what the audience already knows.<sup>21</sup> According to Booth's analysis of Martin Parker's *A description of a strange (and miraculous) Fish*,<sup>22</sup> the news ballad's text does nothing more than recapitulate the single point that what it is describing is a "monstrous," and very big, fish. It offers its audience nothing more than the repeated and varied certainty that the fish in question was huge. The printed broadside becomes a means of taking possession of the experience of the thing that is being described at such length, rather than learning anything of substance about it.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, despite superficially more serious concerns, the ballad about Dorothy Mattley is equally concerned with sensation in bringing the account of God's retribution to the attention of its audience, reiterating both the news of Mattley's punishment, and the providential 'news' of God's responsive omnipotence. Indeed, the framework within which virtually all news ballads situate their narratives is a popular providential discourse.<sup>24</sup>

Another, more visible, sign of ballad titles' rhetorical effects is shown in titles which, instead of boldly proclaiming their truthfulness, signal their truth claims by identifying the emotional response they expect from their audience. Most commonly this reaction is a lamentation, whether the news is an account

21 For details of ballad-selling techniques and performance see Marsh, *Music and Society*, pp. 225–288; Smith, *Acoustic World*, pp. 168–205; Wurzbach, *English Street Ballad*, pp. 39–101.

22 Martin Parker, *A description of a strange (and miraculous) Fish, cast upon the sands in the meads, in the Hundred of Worwell in the County Palatine of Chester, (or Chesshiere[.]). The certainty whereof is here related concerning the said monstrous Fish* (London: Thomas Lambert, 1636); *Pepysian Garland*, pp. 438–442.

23 Mark Booth, *The Experience of Song* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 103–109.

24 See Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

of murder, for example *The unnaturall Wife: Or, The lamentable Murther, of one goodman Davis, Locke-Smith in Tutle-streete*;<sup>25</sup> events of wider political import, such as *A lamentable Ditty composed upon the Death of Robert Lord Devereux, late Earle of Essex*;<sup>26</sup> or the description of natural disasters, as in *The lamentable Burning of the City of Corke (in the Prouince of Munster in Ireland) by Lightning: which happened the Last of May, 1622*.<sup>27</sup> This latter also functions as a sequel to *Battell of the Birds*, describing the events for which those of the earlier text were interpreted as an omen. More local concerns might similarly be described in terms that provoke sorrow or sad contemplation, as in *A dolefull dittye of five unfortunat persons that were drowned in their drunknes in crossing over the Thames neare Ivy Bridge*.<sup>28</sup>

The audience's emotional response is also directed within the ballad text. This last ballad of drunken calamity at Ivy Bridge, for example, opens with the assertion, "What hart so hard, but will relent | of Strangers' suddaine death to heare" (ll. 1–2). Similarly, *A newe Ballad of the most wonderfull and strange sight of Christ's Church pinnacle in Norwitch* begins by asserting:

If ever words did moue a wight  
to shed a wofull teare,  
Then can no creature choose but weepe,  
this dolefull tale to heare.

ll. 1–4

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- 25 [Anonymous], *The ynnaturall wife: or, The lamentable murther, of one goodman Dauis locke-smith in Tutle-streete, who was stabbed to death by his wife, on the 29. of Iune, 1628. For which fact, she was araigned, condemned, and adiudged, to be burnt to death in Smithfield, the 12. Iuly 1628* (London: M. T[rundle], 1628), *EEBO*, accessed 8 February 2012.
- 26 [Anonymous], *A lamentable dittie composed vpon the death of Robert Lord Deuereux late Earle of Essex who was beheaded in the Tower of London, vpon Ashwednesday in the morning. 1601* (London: Margaret Alde, 1603), *EEBO*, accessed 8 February 2012; William M. Chappell and Joseph W. Ebsworth (eds.), *The Roxburghe Ballads*, 9 vols (London: The Ballad Society, 1869–1901), vol. 2, pp. 202–211.
- 27 [Anonymous], *The lamentable Burning of the City of Corke (in the Prouince of Munster in Ireland) by Lightning: which happened the Last of May, 1622. After the prodigious Battell of the Stares, | which Fought most strangely ouer and neere that Citty, the 12. and 14. of May. 1621* (London: E.A., 1622), *EEBO*, accessed 8 February 2013; Pepysian Garland, pp. 155–160.
- 28 [Anonymous], *A dolefull dittye of five unfortunat persons that were drowned in their drunknes in crossing over the Thames neare Ivy Bridge, upon sundaye night the 15 of October last, 1616: set forth for an example for all such prophaners of the Lord's Sabaoth daye in Shirburn Ballads*, pp. 68–71.

Specifying an audience's correct emotional response either in the title or opening stanza is inherently more subjective. It becomes a promise that the ballad's narrative will satisfactorily evoke this emotional quality. 'Truth' here is attested through a quality of feeling, bolstering ballad claims to be considered as truthful accounts through the fulfilment of an aesthetic quality.

The emotional content of ballads could also be supported by the choice of tune. Christopher Marsh has written most extensively on the role which the ballad tune played in the ways in which ballads might have been received by their audience, with melodies "capable of reinforcing, altering and destabilising textual messages."<sup>29</sup> Where a news ballad is set to a sober tune such as "Packington's Pound" or "Fortune My Foe" (also popularly known as the "hanging tune"), the importance of its message would be underlined by the tune to which it was sung. Equally, where "Fortune my Foe" was the tune direction for the apparently celebratory ballad, *A joyful new ballad of the late victorie obtained by my Lord Mount Joy and our Maiestie's forces in Ireland, against that archtraytor Tirone and confederates, upon the 24 of December last*, the emotional response specified by the title would appear to be in conflict with the choice of a doleful tune:<sup>30</sup>

England, giue prayse vnto the Lord thy god,  
the which in mercye doth withhold the rod  
From vs, whose synnes deserued haue the same:  
yet we continwe, Sodome-like, past shame[...]  
ll. 1–4

As the ballad's opening lines make clear, the credit for this military victory and for defending the English nation from its enemies, is granted to God, to whom the unreformed nation should turn in thanks for their victory.

As well as the title, some ballads also employed postscripts, a short prose section placed after the main ballad text, which would never have been intended to be sung, and which explicitly foregrounds their claims to truthfulness and authority. In *The Winter's Tale*, as proof of his ballads' truthfulness, Autolycus offers the signatures of "one Mistress Tale-Porter, and five or six

29 Marsh, *Music and Society*, p. 289.

30 [Anonymous], *A joyful new ballad of the late victorie obtained by my Lord Mount Joy and our Maiestie's forces in Ireland, against that archtraytor Tirone and confederates, upon the 24 of December last. Also of the yeeldinge of the Towne of Kingsalt, with 3 or 4 other houldes, by Don John at Aquila, Generall of the Spanish army, which was yielded by the 9 of January last 1602 in Shirburn Ballads*, pp. 124–128.

honest wives that were present,”<sup>31</sup> or “Five justices [...] and witnesses more than my pack will hold.”<sup>32</sup> The copies of the signatures of which the ballad seller boasts are clearly not part of the text that would be sung by the ballad’s purchaser. Either they might appear as part of the ballad’s title, or more likely they are part of a postscript. Significantly, they are something that Autolycus shows to his onstage audience of potential customers, a visual signifier of the text’s truth claim. An example of the simplest form of postscript, akin to the signatures offered by Autolycus, is found at the end of *The lamentation of Henrye Adlington, one of the cutting crewe of London*, where it states that the ballad contains the words of “Harrye Adlington, made with his owne hand in the Marshalse, after his condemnation” (ll. 73–74).<sup>33</sup> This example, like many ‘goodnight’ ballads, provides a striking example of Bruce Smith’s assertion that “what ballads offer the singer and the listener is the possibility of becoming many subjects, by internalizing the sounds and rhythms of those subjects’ voices.”<sup>34</sup> In this case, the reader or performer is reminded that they have ventriloquized or occupied the subject position of a condemned man, speaking effectively in the exemplary voice of the corpse that hangs at Aldgate.

Other versions of the postscript are oriented to providing authoritative proofs. *News out of East India*, which recounts the massacre of English colonists and destruction of their settlement at Cambello on the island of Amboyna by the Dutch in 1623, provides two lists of names. In one column are the names of those who were executed, whilst the names of those who were pardoned by the Dutch appear in the other.<sup>35</sup> Their individual names act as a referent, signifying the truth of the gruesome events described in the main ballad text. The same effect is achieved in Thomas Deloney’s *A proper new ballad breefley declaring the Death and Execution of fourteen most wicked Traitors*, where the postscript supplies the names of all fourteen traitors.<sup>36</sup> Somewhat more

31 *Winter’s Tale*, iv.iv.269–271.

32 *Ibid.*, iv.iv.283–284.

33 [Anonymous], *The lamentation of Henrye Adlington, one of the cutting crewe of London, who, for murther, was executed without Aldgate, and yet hangeth in chains in Shirburn Ballads*, pp. 106–108.

34 Smith, *Acoustic World*, p. 201.

35 [Anonymous], *Nevves out of East India of the cruell and bloody vsage of our English merchants and others at Amboyna, by the Netherlandish gouernour and counsell there* (London: F. Coules, 1624), *EEBO*, accessed 3 June 2012; *Pepysian Garland*, pp. 201–206.

36 Thomas Deloney, *A proper new ballad breefley declaring the Death and Execution of fourteen most wicked Traitors, who suffered death in Lincolnes Inne feelde neere London: the 20 and 21 of September, 1586* (London: Edward Alde, 1586), *EEBO*, accessed 3 June 2012;

whimsically, the Ivy Bridge ballad includes a list of "The professions of these persons, so vnfortunately drowned" (ll. 121–123), these being a haberdasher, a tailor, a saddler, a barber, and a waterman. This mundane list of professions links the unfortunate persons whose deaths the ballad records with the ordinary concerns of the ballad audience, and produces a sense of verisimilitude, though perhaps also of exemplarity, as it takes in a cross-section of city traders, producing an effect of universal (or at least London mercantile) applicability.

The postscript of *A discription of a monstrous Chylde, borne at Chychester in Sussex*, works in a similar manner, identifying the profession of the child's father, and stressing the moral worth of both parents:

The father hereof is one Vyncent, a boutcher, bothe he and hys wyfe being of honest & quiet conuersation. They hauing had chyldre before, in natural proportion; and went with this her full tyme.<sup>37</sup>

The postscript is part of the ballad's engagement with popular Reformation hermeneutic practices, which attempted to read such monstrous children as evidence of God's role within the world.<sup>38</sup> However, it also serves as a purely literal sign that validates the child's existence in the world against any claims that might be made about the fabulous nature of the child. *Nature's Wonder?*, another ballad about a monstrous child from 1664, with a full title nearly as long as the earlier ballad about Dorothy Mattley, gives its postscript its own title, "A true Relation of this strange and wonderfull MONSTER" (l. 97).<sup>39</sup>

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Thomas Mann (ed.), *The Works of Thomas Deloney* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1912), pp. 464–468.

37 [Anonymous], *A discription of a monstrous Chylde, borne at Chychester in Sussex, the .xxiii. daye of May. This being the very length, and bygnes of the same* (London: Leonard Askel for Fraunces Godlyf, 1562), *EEBO*, accessed 3 June 2012; *Black-Letter Ballads*, pp. 201–204.

38 See Helaine Razovsky, "Popular Hermeneutics: Monstrous Children in English Renaissance Broadside Ballads," *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 2, 3 (1996), 1.1–34.

39 [Anonymous], *Nature's Wonder? OR, [An ac]count how the Wife of one John Wate[...]man an Ostler in the Parish of Fisherton-Anger, near Sali[s]bury, was Delivered of strange Monster upon the 26th. of October 1664. which lived untill the 27th. of the same Moneth. It had two Heads, foure Armes, and two Legs. The Heads standing contrary each to the other; and the Loines, Hipps and Leggs Issueing out of the middle, betwixt both. They were both perfect to the Navell, and there joyned in one, being but one Sex, which was the Female. She had another Child born before it (of the Female Sex) which is yet living, and is a very comely Child in all proportions. This is Attested for truth, by several Persons which were eye wittnesses* (London: E. Andrews, 1664), *EEBO*, accessed 8 February 2013; *Pack of Autolycus*, pp. 140–145.

This repeats information about the names and occupations of the child's parents, a physical description of the child, and details of its place of birth, all of which has already been given in the ballad title. The only new information it supplies at the tail end of this text are details of the witnesses who saw this child:

There hath been both Lords, Ladys, and much Gentry to see it; The Father (being a poore man) had twenty pound given him the first day, by persons of Quality. I Josiah Smith, Practitioner of Phisick, saw them all three alive.

The visitors' value as witnesses is explicitly tied to their social status and profession, whether they are members of the "Gentry" or "Practitioner[s] of Phisick." The presence of Josiah Smith places this ballad, and the monstrous child which is at its heart, within a medical discourse which advertises the body of the child as an object of curiosity: "This *Monster* lived two days and then dyed, and is Imbalmed, and to be brought to *London* to be seen" (ll. 105–106). As the title of one news ballad makes clear, the function of such narratives is "[t]ruth brought to light."<sup>40</sup> In the form of a printed broadside, the news is, like the child of *Nature's Wonder*? an object to be seen and examined.

As has already been noted, the majority of news ballads invoke a providential reading in order to explain the events and prodigies they describe. Certainly within the ballad text, if not within their titles, the use of the word "warning" signifies their providential import: for example, *A Warning for all Murders, A most rare, strange, and wonderful accident, which by God's just judgement was brought to pass, not farre from Rithin in Wales*,<sup>41</sup> or *A warning to London by the fall of Antwerp*.<sup>42</sup> By labelling themselves as a "warning," ballads are basing their authority, and thus their truth claims, on that of divine providence. In the

40 [Anonymous], *Truth brought to light, or, wonderful strange and true news from Gloucestershire, concerning one Mr. William Harrison, formerly steward to the Lady Nowel of Camden, who was supposed to be murdered by the widow Pery and two of her sons* (London: Charles Tyus, 1662), *EEBO*, accessed 6 June 2012; *Pack of Autolycus*, pp. 96–100.

41 [Anonymous], *A warning for all murderers A most rare, strange, and wonderful accident, which by Gods just judgement was brought to passe, not farre from Rithin in Wales, and showne upon three most wicked persons, who had secretly and cunningly murdered a young gentleman named David Williams, that by no meanes it could be knowne, and how in the end it was revenged by a childe of five yeeres old, which was in his mothers wombe, and unborne when the deed was done* (London: Henry Gosson, 1620), *EEBO*, accessed 6 June, 2012.

42 Rafe Norris, *A warning to London by the fall of Antwerp* (London: John Allde, 1577), *EEBO*, accessed 6 June 2012.

case of *A warning to London*, this didactic purpose obscures any value the ballad might have as news. The warning represented by the fall of Antwerp is apparently a reference to the sacking of Antwerp by Spanish troops in November 1576, information about which is absent from both ballad title and text. Instead the ballad is concerned with a didactic appeal to the people of England to "Forsake thy Deuilish drunken trade" (l. 29). Antwerp appears only as a threat for what may happen if the English people fail to repent, a fact with which it assumes its audience is already conversant. In this respect, *A warning to London by the fall of Antwerp* is actually at the other extreme from many of the ballads discussed in this chapter, since by gesturing to a reality beyond its page, the audience can only infer from its reference to "Antwerp" that it is interfacing with an oral culture; that it is part of a conversation around a shared object of knowledge.

Visually however, the ballad still employs the techniques made available by print, adorned both with a picture and an elaborate border. To date, criticism of the broadside picture has tended to follow Natascha Wurzbach's dismissive statement that the woodcuts employed by many ballads were "a crude affair [...] which resulted not infrequently in a crass incongruence between illustration and text."<sup>43</sup> More recently, Malcolm Jones has characterized ballad images' "generic' relevance" to the texts they illustrated as "notorious."<sup>44</sup> The assumption has been that the ballad picture served a purely decorative function, a means of facilitating sales, and that ballads often employed mismatched images from a common stock. Although not all critics have been so dismissive of the ballad picture,<sup>45</sup> it has still tended to be an element relegated to secondary or even tertiary importance after the ballad text and tune. Many images, however, were newly cut for ballad publication.<sup>46</sup> Even in instances where images have clearly been reused from a common stock, some printers, or perhaps their commissioning booksellers or authors, made considerable effort to try to match an appropriate image to the ballad text. It is conceivable that the woodcut image that adorns the broadside of *A Warning to London* (see Fig. 12.1) is a crude attempt at representing the city of Antwerp, but even if it is only a

43 Wurzbach, *English Street Ballad*, p. 9.

44 Malcolm Jones, *The Print in Early Modern England: An Historical Oversight* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 5.

45 See Patricia Fumerton, "Not Home: Alehouses, Ballads, and the Vagrant Husband in Early Modern England," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 22. 3 (2002), pp. 493–518; Angela McShane, "Subjects and Objects: Material Expressions of Love and Loyalty in Seventeenth-Century England," *Journal of British Studies*, 48. 4 (2009), pp. 871–886, at 878–884; Watt, *Cheap Print*, pp. 131–216; Smith, *Acoustic World*, pp. 204–205.

46 Marsh, *Music and Society*, p. 227; Watt, *Cheap Print*, p. 148.



FIGURE 12.1 *Rafe Norris*, *A warning to London by the fall of Antwerp* (London: John Allde, 1577). This item is reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California. RB 18324.

'generic' image of an urban context, its imagery still matches the ballad's argument. The four figures surrounding the city, representing the buffeting winds, are consistent with the metaphors employed in the ballad's argument that London needs to 'stand fast' against the threatening forces surrounding it, lest it should suffer the same fate as its exemplar.

Another attempted match between ballad image and text is found in the ballad, *A Wonderfull wonder: Being a most strange and true relation of the resolute life and miserable death of Thomas Miles*.<sup>47</sup> Miles died by choking to death

47 L.P., *A wonderfull vvonder; being a most strange and true relation of the resolute life, and miserable death of Thomas Miles, who did forswear himselfe, and wished that God might*





FIGURE 12.2 *L.P.*, A wonderfull vvonder, being a most strange and true relation of the resolute life, and miserable death of Thomas Miles... (London: John Wright junior, 1635).

© THE BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD HUTH 50[30].

at table after uttering blasphemies against God (see Fig. 12.2). His corpse was, apparently, cut open by surgeons at St. Bartholomew's hospital, who discovered that he had choked on a "gub of meate" (l. 46). The ballad opens by appealing to God, "Looke down, O Lord, upon this sinfull land!" (l. 1), establishing that it is sight which allows God to discern human wrongdoing. A more human investigation is described in the ballad's eleventh stanza:

the surgeons tooke in hand  
To rip him up, that they might understand  
The truth and reason how he lost his breath,  
And how he came by his untimely death.  
ll. 41–44

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*shew some heavie example upon him, and so it came to passe for as hee sate at his meate hee choked himselfe, and died in short space after, which hapned the 8. of August last, 1635. and being ript up by the chirurgions of S. Bartholomewes Hospitall, was found to have a gub of meate sticking fast in his throate, which was the cause of his death. Written to warne all rash swearers to forsake their evill wayes, which God grant we may* (London: John Wright junior, 1635), *EEBO*, accessed 6 June 2012.

In this context the image above it, which is much more likely to be a representation of a murder, here stands in as a representation of the surgeons' examination, identified as such by the ballad. It represents an opening of the body to the agency of human sight, an operation carried out by "Men of good credit" (l. 50), paralleling the means by which God spies out wrongdoers and the providential reading of events which the ballad foregrounds throughout.

The anxieties about an event's truthfulness which are, as noted above, signalled by a stress on both the existence of witnesses and their moral worth, emphasizes how most of the paratextual devices employed by ballads to bolster their truth claims purport to be substitutes for vision; it is only through sight – through direct witnessing – that 'true events' can be perceived. With their emphasis on the thing that is being perceived, ballads about monstrous children give perhaps the clearest relationship between text and image, most markedly highlighting their status as printed objects. As the title of one monstrous child ballad has it, it offers its audience not a text or a description, but "The true fourme and shape" of monstrosity.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, the full title of the aforementioned *Discription of a monstrous Chylde*, boasts that it is "the very length, and bygnes of the same." This refers not to a description contained in the ballad text, since there is none, but to its picture (see Fig. 12.3). The ballad text is concerned to moralize the meaning of this monstrous birth, referring to the appearance of the child in passing, in lines which clearly relate the truth status of the ballad to its medium: "But here thou haste by Printing arte | A signe therof to se" (ll. 61–62). Without the aid of the arts of printing, there would be nothing for the audience to see. The "signe" of the illustration substitutes for the act of witnessing, and indexes the 'truth' of its referent as a visible, and quantifiable, object. Evidence that broadsides functioned as visual objects as well as a medium for the transmission of an oral text is clear from reports of broadsides being pasted to walls as decoration.<sup>49</sup> The audience is thus invited to repeat, or participate in, the act of witnessing and attestation that the ballad describes.

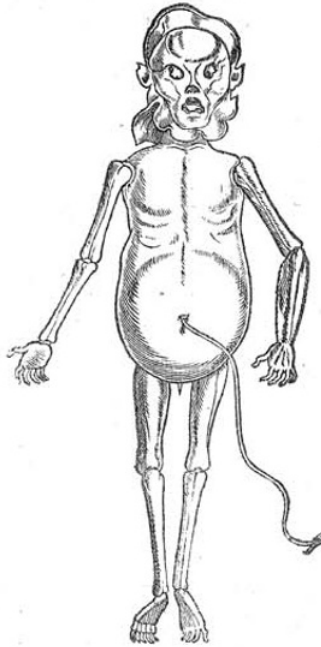
Critics have frequently noted how the shepherdess Mopsa naively equates print with truthfulness in *The Winter's Tale*.<sup>50</sup> The ballads offered for sale by Autolycus give examples of many of the same devices that have been examined

48 William Elderton, *The true fourme and shape of a monstrous Chylde, Which was borne in Stony Stratforde, in North Hampton shire. The yeare of our Lord, M.CCCC.LXV.* (London: Thomas Colwell, 1565), *EEBO*, accessed 6 June 2012; Herbert L. Collman (ed.), *Broadsides & Ballads chiefly Of the Elizabethan Period* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1971), p. 113.

49 Watt, *Cheap Print*, p. 148–149.

50 For example, Smith, *Acoustic World*, p. 187.

**A discription of a monstrous Chylde, borne at Chychester in Sussex, the .xxiii. daye of May. This being the very length, and bygnes of the same. M. CCCC. LXX.**



**W**hen God for synne, to plague hath met  
Although, he longe defarde  
He tokent truly, straunge hath sent  
To make hys foes a feare.

What they thereby, might take remedye  
Of their yll lyfe mispent  
And moze of loue, then feare o' foze  
Their fo'mall faultes repent.

Before the earth was ouerfloven  
With waters huge throughout  
He sent them Aor, that boie one  
Who dayly went about.

To call them then, to Godly lyfe  
He woldome they laughte and fumed  
He was contente of man and wyfe  
Till they were all confounde.

Both did preache most earnestly  
But it did not p'reuail;  
Then sye and bymone berely  
Upon them doun did baile.

Pharases heart had no remorse  
Though woundere straunge he fawne  
But rather was therofe the woze  
Without all feare o' awe.

Untyll bothe he and his therofe  
By iustice sent of God  
In raging seas, were all forloze  
And then he felt the reb.

Ten tymes treuly were the Jewes  
In captiue brought and led  
Before eche tyme, if God did vife  
Hes tokent strange in red.

The peare before Waspatian came  
The Jewes a heifer dyest  
Whiche beyng slayne, did calue a lame  
This segne they fone did wylt.

As others doe, and still haue done  
In making it as wayne  
O' eis good lucke, they saye shal come  
As please their foolish byayne.

The Deatheen coulde fozele and sage  
What when suche woundere were  
It did foze thew to them alwaie  
That some yll bay byelw nere.

The scripture sayth, before the ende  
Of all thinges shall appeare  
God will woundere straunge thinges sende  
As some is fene this yeare.

The selpe Infantes, boyde of shape  
The Calues and pygges so straunge  
With other mo of suche mishape  
Declareth this woordes chaunge.

But here, lo, see aboue the rest  
A wonder to behold  
Proceedinge from a Chylian byest  
So monstrous to be tolde.

So Carner can, noz Daynter maye  
The same so ougly make  
As doeth it felt thew at this daye  
A sight to make the quake.

But here thou haste by wynting arte  
A signe therof to se  
Het eche man saye with in his harte  
It preacheth now, to me.

That I shoulde seche to lyue hencefoorth  
In Godly lyfe allowe  
For thes be tokent now sentfoorth  
To preache the later daye.

Also it doeth demonstrate playne  
The great abuse and bye  
That here in Englande now doeth ragyne  
That monstrous is the guyfe.

By readinge woyses, we shall sende  
In scripture, and elles wode  
That when suche thinges came out of kynde  
Gods wozd it did declare.

But if we lightely wepe thesame  
And make but myne dayes wonder  
The Lord our floures, fone will tame  
And sharply bynge vs vnder.

Then ponder wel betymes, long paye  
The sequel of suche signes  
And call to God by prayer in haile  
From sinne to chaunge our mynnes.

Repent, amende bothe bygh and lowe  
The woode of God rebuize  
To lyue thereto, as we shoulde doe  
God geue vs all the grace.

quod. Abon. D.

The father herof is one Wynernt, a bont  
cher, bothe he and hys wyfe being of bonett  
quiet conuersation. They hauing had chyldre  
before, in natural proportion: and went with  
this her full tyme.

**Imprinted at London, by  
Leonard Askel for Fraunces Godlyf. In  
the yeare of oure Lorde. 1562.**

FIGURE 12.3 [Anonymous], A discription of a monstrous Chylde, borne at Chychester in Sussex, the .xxiii. daye of May. This being the very length, and bygnes of the same (London: By Leonard Askel for Fraunces Godlyf; 1562).

throughout this chapter in a parodic form. Their titles, which give accounts of absurd events such as “how a usurer’s wife was brought to bed of twenty money-bags at a burden, and how she longed to eat adder’s heads and toads carbanadoed,”<sup>51</sup> and how “a fish that appeared upon the coast on Wednesday the fourscore of April, forty thousand fathom above water, and sung this ballad against the hard hearts of maids,”<sup>52</sup> appear designed to mock their rustic audience’s attempts to establish their truthfulness. The nonsensical “Wednesday the fourscore of April”<sup>53</sup> is clearly parodying through exaggeration the apparently sincere attempts to establish a precise date found in the titles of many contemporary ballads. Likewise, the signatures offered by Autolycus burlesque the weight that genuine ballad postscripts place on the signatures they employ to signify authority and truthfulness. The extravagant events of his ballads are perhaps not so different in kind from warring flocks of birds, but his untrustworthiness is made clear to the theatre audience from his first appearance, where he presents himself as “a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles,”<sup>54</sup> and mocks his customers for their having trust in his wares: “what a fool Honesty is! and Trust his sworn brother, a very simple gentleman!”<sup>55</sup>

*The Winter’s Tale* provides us with a double view of ballad audiences. We are faced with the rustic, onstage audience who appear happy to accept the ballads they purchase at face value, placing trust in their accounts and claims to truthfulness, however outlandish the narratives they present. Offstage, there is the urban theatre audience which is invited to laugh at the naivety of this rustic acceptance of ballads’ truth claims since they know such texts to be notoriously false and a source of amusement and entertainment. No doubt, the real reception of broadside ballads, if it could be recovered, would not map so easily onto the rather simple rural/urban divide with which the play presents us. What this theatrical representation of a ballad seller shows is that there was a multitude of possible responses to ballad texts, responses which ballads in their turn responded to by providing ever more elaborate apparatuses by which their audience might establish the truth of the ‘news ballad’.

The employment of such paratextual devices by broadside texts to bolster their authority and status as true accounts is clearly a result of the growing influence of the print trade, their visual effects only achievable through the medium of print. The very extravagance of some ballad truth claims, and

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51 *Winter’s Tale*, iv.iv.262–265.

52 *Ibid.*, iv.iv.275–278.

53 *Ibid.*, iv.iv.276–277.

54 *Ibid.*, iv.iii.26.

55 *Ibid.*, iv.iv.600–601.

the proliferation of markers intended to assure readers, singers, and viewers of their authenticity, encourages modern critics almost universally to ally themselves with the clear-sighted, urban elite conjured by Shakespeare's play, imagining a playful self-awareness in place of what might just as easily be read as a deeply felt sincerity. To do so, however, is potentially to lose sight of the ways in which early modern 'news ballads' were part of a culture which was both highly invested in providential discourses and increasingly concerned to establish the authenticity of their accounts. Best viewed as a form of multimedia text which combined oral and print modes of dissemination and communication, the 'news ballad' was a genre which enthusiastically and creatively embraced the credit inherent in printed texts, the satisfaction of aesthetic qualities, and a sense of divine order to produce a compelling series of truth-events, which inextricably yoke together the wonderful and the mundane, the urgency of proof and the requirement for belief.



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